University of Alberta

Hope and Post-War Adjustment in Refugee Children

by

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Hope is a strange invention
A patent of the heart
In unremitting action
Yet never wearing out.

Emily Dickinson

L. Oscroft, Edmonton, 2003.

For my children....Joshua and Maya.

May you always know you are not alone.
May you always find a source of hope.

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Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things,
But just look what they can do when they stick together. Vista M. Kelly

In the last few years of my PhD program, I found great joy in jogging. During the dissertation project, my weekly runs and participation in some organized races began to parallel my academic journey. Like running, some analysis and writing days began agonizingly slow but ended with the increased energy and sense of well-being that comes from running. Other days, it was the cheers and encouragement of the onlookers that carried me on another mile towards the finish line. I believe that no runner is completely alone along the path to the finish line. Any accomplishment is achieved with the wisdom and support of mentors and the cheers of many onlookers.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

If it were not for hopes, the heart would break
Thomas Fuller, 1732

It was a cold winter's afternoon. A light snow was falling gently on the inner-city streets. Indoors, a group of refugee children in an early intervention program were chatting excitedly as they busied themselves with glue, construction paper, and crayons. It was February 14th and the children were making Valentine cards for "special people" with important messages for them. As I browsed through the tables helping children cut paper, answering questions, and stopping to admire a maroon heart, I noticed that most of the cards were being made for family members. Then one boy, I shall call him Sam, came up to me and shyly asked me to help him as he wanted to make a card for "the little baby". Thinking he meant his new baby brother, I began to fold a piece of construction paper when he corrected me and in halting English, and using our usual crayons and paper, he proceeded to tell me a story of him and his family in a boat leaving their homeland. I later found out that this was the family's flight story from their war-torn country. Sam drew a picture of a boat and talked of the water being "big big big" and lots of waves in the sea. The boat had other people in it including his mother, father, older sibling, and a baby brother. At one point the boat capsized and most of the people were thrown into the sea, including his mother and baby brother. His mother was saved but the child was never found. Sam told me he felt sad when he thought of his lost brother. I later discovered that Sam had these memories since his mother gave birth to another son. His family never talked about the incident and did not think that Sam could have remembered anything because he was only 4 at the time the accident occurred. He was 6 when he told me this story. When he was 6, Sam somehow found the courage to connect with his lost brother through creative activities that allowed him to begin to grieve the loses in his life. On Valentines Day, two years after his arrival in Canada, Sam initiated a creative and imaginative process that may have been essential to his psychosocial adjustment. Somehow, Sam found a source of hope.

Background to Inquiry

Sam's is but one story of over 10 million children who have been psychologically traumatized during wars and displacement in the last decade (UNICEF, 2000). Their life stories may also include disrupted lives, inadequate health care resulting in disease and malnutrition, social, emotional, and physical deprivation, significant personal losses, and educational gaps (Cramer Azima & Grizenko, 2002; Van der Veer, 1992). Canada is one of the leading western countries receiving people who flee from persecution and distress. At the end of 2001, Canada hosted 70, 000 refugees and asylum seekers in need of protection (USCR, 2004). Forty-seven percent of the 44,500 people who applied in 2001 were granted asylum. Nearly three-quarters of immigrant children are of school age (Cole, 1998). If these children present with difficulties related to behavior or academic achievement, then prior or recent exposure to traumatic incidents as well as ongoing secondary stressors related to adjustment could shed light on their difficulties. While children often effectively resist extreme psychic trauma, others, like Sam, are not so fortunate and develop symptoms associated with post traumatic stress (Shaw, 2000).

Much of the recent literature and media images of refugee children from war-torn countries is deficit-focused. In his review of research on refugee literature, Ahearn (2000) concluded that the majority of researchers have chosen to study trauma and stress rather than psychological well-being. Words like trauma, distress, depression, anger and anxiety are commonly linked to experiences of refugees and their families. These are most certainly very real emotions and challenges for many refugees but in some important ways, the dominance of deficit-based language can be limiting. It can mask ways in which refugees develop strategies, find courage, and find opportunities to overcome depression, grief, and anxiety, and grasp small glimpses of hope in an

otherwise impenetrable wall of hardship. Such a focus turns our attention away from information that reports there are refugees who eventually settle and live meaningful and fulfilling lives. Anthropologist Michael Jackson (2002) noted the stigmatization of refugee experiences in writing that focuses on losses rather than capturing their full lived experience:

> As long as we think of refugees as solely victims, we do a grave injustice to the facts of refugee experience, for loss is always contermandered by actions- albeit imaginative, magical, and illusory – to regain some sense of balance between the world within and the world without" (pg. 79)

An example of this kind of action can be seen in many small ways - - for example Sam's decision to make a Valentine heart for the brother he lost, and was still grieving, even after settling in a new and safer county.

Having worked with children like Sam, I was interested in what can be done to intervene and to enhance hope in children who have been affected by armed conflict and secondary adversities associated with relocation to a new country. This research was conducted with children like Sam in mind. What can be done to intervene, to prevent, and to promote resilience and hope in children who have experienced significant losses and traumatic events? An assumption underlying this study was that information to improve our practice as teachers, psychologists and other practitioners in the pediatric fields emerges from the stories of success as told by children and those adults who work closely with them. This assumption is gleaned from my observations of something that allows children in difficult circumstances to remain resilient whether they are street youth in an African city (Yohani, 1995) or refugees in Canada.

The curiosity to better understand what influenced Sam to reach a place of being ready to self initiate his grieving process and share his story is explored through the lens

of hope. A focus on hope or positive aspects of refugee and immigrant experiences does not imply a disregard for challenges and difficulties. Seligman (1998) observed from a well informed position of having researched hopelessness and depression for many years, that much information on what "works" comes from stories of success. Wessells (1999) admonishes that using western lenses alone to understand experiences such as trauma and loss creates the risk of marginalizing local voices and cultural traditions, disempowering communities, and limit healing. Thus by refocusing on what engenders or hinders hope, this study attempted to move refugee and immigrant children from a purely victim image to highlight ways in which they are active agents in their own lives.

This research is timely in that attention to human strengths is beginning to take shape in fields that have traditionally focused on negative sequel of trauma and stressful life events. In a recent conference address on *Disaster, Terrorism, and Public Policy*, Daniel Dogen (2004) suggested that much work in the trauma field is deficit-based and there is a need for more research that focuses on resilience and protective factors. The merits of focusing on strengths within community-based work are also raised in the literature on resilience. Brooks (1994) points out that this strengths-based approach does not imply ignorance of vulnerabilities, but instead broadens our perceptions to include the positive attributes of children:

> Such a focus creates an atmosphere in which blame and accusation give way to compassion and understanding, in which all parties (parents, school, neighbourhood and community agencies) are encouraged to work closely together, in which caregivers receive the support and education required to help children, and in which caregivers are empowered to appreciate their own immense potential for positively influencing the life of a child. (p. 509)

As such, this exploratory research sought to gather more information to facilitate children's adjustment after immigrating to a new country, often having undergone

traumatic experiences or experienced significant losses in countries of origin. Guiding this inquiry were the questions: "*What are the hope-engendering and hindering experiences of school age children who are recent immigrants and refugees from war torn countries? What do these children and important people in their lives perceive to be helpful in aiding their psychosocial adjustment in resettlement countries?*" Knowing the experiences of such children, as well as what they and those in their milieu perceive to be hope-engendering after displacement, will provide an initial step towards helping various service providers (teachers, resettlement workers, mental health practitioners etc) to recognize and identify risk factors that prevent refugee children from feeling hopeful and that may interfere with psychosocial adjustment after challenging experiences. Such knowledge may also aid in developing and implementing relevant intervention and prevention strategies for children and caregivers in similar situations.

Direction of Inquiry

This study took place in an early intervention program for refugee and immigrant children. The majority of program participants were recent newcomers from war affected countries. Having worked earlier in the program, I was aware that being armed with trauma training and statistics on the effects of war on children was not sufficient for my being able to work with the children and their families. There was a dissonance between my deficits-based models of training and the resilience that I saw as children were taking on a new challenge of settling into another unfamiliar environment (often having spent time in refugee camps or under asylum in other countries).

My venture back into research with this population was an attempt to find a more balanced or holistic view of psychosocial adjustment. Using the strengths-based

orientation in hope literature to better understand experiences during early years of adjustment, I asked refugee children in an early intervention program to explore what hope is for them and describe what makes them hopeful. Views of hope in the children as well as what engenders or hinders hope were also elicited from individuals in the children's life contexts (including program staff, cultural brokers, and parents). A human ecological framework was used as a broader lens to understand children's experiences. The use of a hope perspective was employed to bring to light positive as well as negative experiences associated with adjustment.

The use of a holistic and hope-focused approach required a shift from a focus on psychosocial adjustment through the detection and outlining of trauma symptoms in participants to a stance that tried to understand children's perspectives regarding their current experiences. As I processed this with colleagues, I embraced a more child-centered stance that allowed children to share as much as they wanted in ways that were most comfortable to them. I was not the expert searching for evidence, but the learner being taught by and learning with the children. A significant aspect of this approach was the use of creative methods to engage children, and I specifically returned to a photography method I had used with African youth. The use of photographs literally allowed me to engage with the children in their current life contexts as captured well in the words of Judy Weiser:

> I would offer the suggestion that rather than being able to walk in their (children and youth) shoes for a day in order to really experience the world as they do, let us instead ask to step behind their cameras in order to see what (and how) they see; to pose for them under their direction of how we should be (or pose) for the camera; to reflect with them upon the meanings, feelings, memories, and thoughts stimulated by a photo-catalyst (1988, p. 372).

The outcome was a focus on process, on discovery, and what was personally important to participants rather than the search for evidence of pre-conceived notions of participant's experiences. This approach and emerging results eventually led me to review and re-appreciate the work of Judith Herman. In *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) Herman maintains that adjustment or recovery from trauma and loss requires the reconstruction of meaning, the rebuilding of hope, and the sense of empowerment needed to regain control of one's being and life. For Herman, strengths-based psychological processes such as hope are worthy of focus in recovery given the many negative psychological processes associated with challenging life events.

Underlying Assumptions

Any qualitative research process is guided by underlying assumptions that determine the research framework (theory, ontology), that underpin questions asked (epistemology), and approaches taken (methodology, analysis) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). It is therefore important at the outset of this dissertation to outline the underlying assumptions that directed the positions taken and methods used in this research. As a qualitative researcher, I situate myself within a social constructivist paradigm (Gergen, 1992). This interpretive framework holds a relativist ontology, a subjective epistemology, and adherence to naturalistic methodologies. In other words, it subscribes to the notion of multiple realities (Palys, 2003; Shwandt, 2000); that human action and language are subjective and have meaning that is constructed within socio-cultural contexts (Gergen, 1985); and research methods that aim to capture lived experience should take place in the contexts of people's lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). These

assumptions underlie my use of human ecology and hope theories, and case study as a strategy of inquiry.

Use of a Human Ecological Perspective

In this study, a human ecological perspective was used to enhance my understanding of refugee and immigrant children's psychosocial adjustment. There are several reasons for having chosen this approach. First, a human ecological perspective, or a recognition that both human and environmental factors interact in determining quality of life, is based on the philosophy that humans have value and potential (Steiner, 1995: Westeneyer, Brabble, & Edwards, 1988). This contextualized view is supported by literature that calls for more holistic approaches for working with displaced and war affected children (Wessells, 2004). Second, Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological theory of child development shares a similar contextualized orientation but also takes into account subjective responses and their impact on children's growth. This approach to child development sees children as active participants in shaping their lives through their interactions with objects and people in their social-cultural environments.

Bronfenbrenner's perspective on changes within the developing individual is often associated with a constructivist view of learning. This cognitive view of learning assumes knowledge is constructed in the context of the activity of the culture (Gredler, 1997; Prawat & Floden, 1994). Although developed within a modernist paradigm, Bronfenbrenner's ideas of learning and growth have parallels to social constructionism (Gergen, 1992) in his particular attention to the reciprocal interactions between individuals and their environment. Social constuctionism shares similarities with constructivism but with the added focus on social aspects of the construction of

knowledge (Hoffman, 1990). Kvale (1992) noted that many key theories and practices within the field of psychology emerge from the modernist paradigm. One approach to practicing psychology within a postmodern era is to review these theories in light of social constructionist ideas (Larsen, 1999).

Shwandt (2000) makes a distinction between radical and moderate constructionist positions as to the role social factors play in determining legitimate or true interpretations. He notes that radical social constructionists would disagree with the idea of having broad standards to evaluate interpretations on the basis that knowledge is always localized and therefore evaluations can only exists within local contexts. The position taken in this study does not subscribe to the modernist notion of meaning being objective and capable of being understood independent of its interpreter. At the same time, it does not maintain a skeptical view of the value of modernist psychological theories. Instead, it takes a well established theoretical perspective (i.e. Bronfenbrenner's human development theory) and seeks to explain it in a new light. Shwandt describes this position as "moderate" in that it "attempts to recast these [sometimes modernist] notions in a different epistemological framework and thereby preserve some way of distinguishing better or worse interpretations" (p. 198). Although this study is positioned closely to a moderate constructionist epistemology, it does not claim to present a better interpretation of refugee children's adjustment experiences. Instead it offers a different perspective with the hope of expanding or building on our current understandings.

Use of a Hope Lens

In an effort to obtain a more balanced or holistic view of mental health in refugee and immigrant children, I chose to draw on ideas from the emerging field of hope studies. Recognizing that people make meaning in social contexts, I was conscious of my position as a researcher in perpetuating what might be less preferred ways of thinking (i.e. as being deficient or a victim) through a focus on problems.

A hope lens using aspects of social constructionist ideas found in narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1990) is being used in the emerging practice of hope-focused counselling (Edey & Jevne, 2003; Edey, Jevne, & Westra, 1998). This approach sees counsellors collaborating with clients to explore ways of making hope more visible in their lives and in doing so increasing personal resources. This application of human meaning-making resonates with my own observations (from growing up in Tanzania to working as a novice counsellor) of individuals in difficult circumstances often maintaining a form of resilience or strength that allows them to remain engaged in life.

Thus, I entered this research with the assumption that asking questions using a hope lens would respect participants as active agents in their lives. Furthermore, approaching hope within a social constructionist paradigm, I recognize there are multiple perspectives on hope. For this reason, I did not attempt to define what hope is but facilitated the self explorations of hope in children and adults.

Use of a Case Study Design

Case study was deemed a suitable research design for my goal within the present study to understand psychosocial adjustment in a group of refugee children in an early intervention program. The philosophical assumptions embedded within qualitative case

studies are derived from qualitative inquiry. I agree with Merriam's (1988) position that case studies are research designs and do not emerge directly from any specific philosophical paradigm. In turn Merriam suggests that researchers need to reflect on assumptions and make them explicit at the outset of the case study investigation.

A case study is "an examination of a specific phenomenon, such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group" (Merriam, p.9). It is particularly useful when a researcher has little control over events and when the focus is a phenomenon taking place within a specified context (Yin, 1994). By drawing clear boundaries around the issue or place being studied, case studies are uniquely suited to research that intends to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events or processes (Yin, 1994).

Case studies are distinguished from other designs in their dual search for the common and particular, with the uncommon being highlighted (Stake, 2000). Therefore, the inherent attention to context, holism, and applicability to studying groups were seen as well suited to this study's framework and questions. Furthermore, these qualities are in line with a social constructionist world view which also underscores the important role of social interactions in determining perceptions of reality. Case study research, like other interpretive approaches to inquiry, is exploratory, inductive, and process oriented.

Stake (1998) defines three types of case studies. Intrinsic case studies are undertaken to better understand a particular case. Instrumental case studies are used to facilitate understanding of something other than the case such as providing insight into an issue or refinement of theory. A study of more than one case to inquire into a phenomenon, population, or general condition, is called a collective case study. This

study represented an instrumental case study of a group of refugee and immigrant children involved in an early intervention program. It was conducted to achieve better understanding of the children's psychosocial adjustment and hope during the early period of adjustment in resettlement countries.

In instrumental case studies, the particular case, context and activities are detailed with the goal of understanding the issue under study. This simultaneous interest in the particular (i.e. the group of children in a program) and the general (issue of psychosocial adjustment and hope in newcomer children) is common in instrumental cases and distinguishes them from intrinsic studies (Stake, 2000). Therefore this study attended to the particular experiences of the children and adults involved in the program, and also placed the experiences in the broader context of literature. The selection of data gathering techniques, approach to analysis and interpretation and notions of trustworthiness and generalizabilty are influenced by one's research method and philosophical orientation. Thus in the following section, I will briefly outline the underlying assumptions in these various components of the study.

Data Collection Methods

Case study researchers typically use multiple and diverse forms of data collection ranging from interviews and direct observations, to physical artifacts (Yin, 194; Bassey, 1999). Likewise, multiple perspectives are sought through the inclusion of multiple and diverse participants. Stake (1998) explains that multiple methods and perceptions (triangulation) are used to clarify meaning, verify the repeatability of an observation or interpretation, and reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation. This approach to triangulation has typically been used in interpretive research to uncover a singular

perspective on the issue being researched. Stake (2000) expands this approach within case study research by adding that triangulation also uncovers meaning by pointing out different ways the phenomenon is being seen, because no interpretations are perfectly repeatable.

In this study, multiple perspectives of hope in children during early years of adjustment were gathered from children, staff, and parents. Sources of information included interviews, observations, and documents. Therefore, triangulation within this study is also viewed as a process that adds breadth and depth by pointing out different ways of seeing experiences. Also, a human ecological perspective was used to guide data collection activities that allowed children to reflect on experiences beyond the research setting. In studying hope, researchers discuss hope as involving a creative process (Jevne, 1993). As such, stories and other creative methods (e.g. photographs) deemed helpful in describing personal experience associated with hope (Jevne, Nekolaichuk & Boman, 1999) were used in this research with children.

Researcher's Position

Like other forms of qualitative research, case studies recognize the researcher as the central instrument of data collection, analysis and interpretation (Patton, 1990; Stake, 1995). Thus as a researcher, I recognize my position as non objective, but as one who seeks to understand through what Kerdeman (cited in Schwandt, 2000) called a process of engagement. For me this process involved paying attention to issues of power (Freedman & Combs, 1996), voice and signature (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) – particularly with children.

In working through issues of power, I intentionally worked to situate myself as an equal "learner" during the research process rather than a "mental health expert" seeking to uncover what is known. This involved building relationships with staff, children, and parents over a period of time to build trust and explain my intentions as a researcher seeking to learn with and from them. This also involved the ethics process of seeking informed consent from adults and assent from children. When working through issues of voice and signature, I was reminded by Stake that "subjectivity is not seen as a failing needing to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding" (Stake, 1995, p. 45). Thus with attention to self-awareness through initial and ongoing documentation and clarification with participants, ultimately, I am aware that the final product as presented in this document represents my interpretation as well as those of my participants.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Case studies do not have a prescribed approach to analysis of data. Thematic analysis is identified as one approach among others that can be used to make sense of data (Stake, 1998). A *thematic analysis* of narratives refers to the "recovering of a theme or themes that are embodied and dramatized in the evolving meanings and imagery of the work" (Van Manen, 1994, p. 78). Ultimately thematic analysis provides a framework to look for patterns among data that give meaning to the case study.

For practical purposes Collaizzi's (1978) thematic analysis method was used as a general guideline to analyze both the children and adults' data. The analysis steps included: (1) reading each transcript as a whole several times and paying attention to specific words, then (2) reading texts again and highlighting significant sentences or

phrases (meaning units) relating to the question, (3) paraphrasing the significant statements or phrases to determine the meaning, (4) clustering the paraphrases into a theme, and (6) pulling together related themes into larger themes based on shared meanings or relatedness. A final step involved a (7) cross case analysis whereby individual-derived themes were compared across all transcripts to produce even broader themes.

This search for patterns involved a comparison of emerging results across cases, with related artwork, with observations made in a field journal, and as themes emerged, with theory. This process in case study research is creative, one which Simons (1986) argues "draws our attention particularly to the need to think holistically, to perceive directly, to engage our passions and emotions as well as our intellect in coming to understand" (pg. 7). To aid this process, memos were made throughout the data collection, analysis and writing processes to assist with interpretation. This involved writing summaries of themes, of individual perspectives on hope, and use of charts and diagrams to explore relationships between themes.

Colaizzi's final step involves defining the essential structure of the concept under study. Given that this was not a phenomenological study, and the essence (objective truth) of children's experience was not sought, this was not done. Instead, the findings of this study are viewed as one perspective of the children's experience of hope and psychosocial adjustment. This perspective combines mine as well as my participants' views on the topic at hand. This interpretation also acknowledges the influence of other perspectives including supervisor comments.

Trustworthiness

The immediate goal of a case study is to highlight the particular rather than form broad generalizations. Through rich and thick descriptions of the issues under study readers may identify with their own experiences and evoke new meanings and understandings. Stake (1995, 2000) maintains that this vicarious experience is a form of generalization. In my interpretation, this is an example of how knowledge can be constructed socially. That is, readers construct their own understanding of the research through their interaction with the author's interpretations of human experience. Stake describes this form of generalization as a social process whereby "in their experiential and contextual accounts, case study researchers assist readers in the construction of knowledge" (pg. 442).

Another form of generalization is captured in the summary statements of actions that have been useful in the context of the study. Examples of these statements are in the "implications for practice" sections in the various chapters of this study. Polkinghorne (1992) describes these statements as neopragmatic in that they assume that some actions may be more effective than others. While these generalizations do not claim to predict actions in new situations, they hold heuristic value as indicators of what might be tried in similar situations. Bassey (1999) described these statements as "fuzzy propositions" emerging from case study research. Thus as Stake (2000) points out, caution must be taken by readers when interpreting such statements in instrumental case studies.

Methods to ensure the trustworthiness of this study included: (1) triangulating (Stake, 1995) multiple sources (observations, interviews and art) of information with multiple participants and referential literature to aid interpretation. (2) Use of memos and

an audit trail to clarify meaning of results and track study activities. (3) Member checks (Collaizzi, 1978; Meadows & Morse, 2001) with participants were conducted to ensure agreement of re-presentation between their narratives and my observations and interpretations. (4) Search for disconfirming instances (Bassey, 1999) within data was conducted and reflected upon. (5) Consultation with my supervisors and peers to ensure clarity of analysis and interpretation of results. (6) A prolonged process of data gathering on site (Merriam, 1988) was used to provide concrete information for interpretation. This study has also been written using thick descriptions and creative illustrations (e.g. using vignettes and visual imagery) to provide the reader with enough information to aid the reader's personal interpretation and decisions regarding application. The following section outlines the organization of this document.

Organization and Summary of Content Chapters

This dissertation is made up of three papers that focus on various perspectives and aspects of children's hope and psychosocial adjustment. These views are explained from the vantage point of children, parents, staff and cultural brokers who were involved in an early intervention program that helps refugee and immigrant children with resettlement. Although drawn from one large case study of children in a program, individual in-depth perspectives of children and of staff are written as individual self containing papers. A third paper captures the combined perspectives through a synthesis of theory and discussion of the process of the research. Following the three papers, a final chapter summarizes results from the above three papers and provides a broader perspective on refugee and immigrant children's adjustment through reflections. In addition, this

summary chapter contains implications for practice, program recommendations, and future research. The following provides a brief summary of each paper chapter.

Hope Lives in the Heart: Refugee & Immigrant Children's Perceptions of Hope-Engendering Sources.

This paper focuses on 10 children's expressions of hope and hope-engendering sources they considered helpful during the early years of adjustment. Hope is described as a dynamic enduring presence in the children, with external expressions that are facilitated by sources including self empowering activities, secure relationships, and a sensed relationship with the natural world. This paper reflects on children's descriptions of hope and sources of hope in the context of adjustment and establishes that, given children's experiences of loss, dislocation, and isolation, these sources engender hope by their contribution to a sense of security and empowerment.

Nurturing Hope in Refuge Children during Early Years of Post-War Adjustment.

The primary focus on this paper was how 12 program staff view hope in the children with whom they work, what engenders hope, and what factors present as barriers or challenges towards a child's ability to be hopeful. A secondary focus was on the ways staff perceived themselves to build hope in the children's lives in the work they do within the program. Using the metaphor of hope as a seed, staff perspectives are captured in three themes that portray hope as present, experiences that engender hope, and challenges that hinder hope. The staff's approaches to engendering hope are captured through the sub-theme, "growing seeds of hope." The importance of hopeful-orientations, nurturing

hope through caring adult relationships, supporting helper's hope, and cultural awareness in work with refugee and immigrant children are highlighted in this paper.

An Ecology of Hopefulness: Creating Connections as a Means of Enhancing Hope and Resilience in Refugee and Immigrant Children

The final paper is based on a general discussion of the research process and findings. It illustrates how the ecological framework was used to explore hope with refugee and immigrant children involved in an early intervention program. It also presents this framework as a guide for hope-enhancing interventions which practitioners may explore further or use with similar groups of children. Key observations resulting from this study are presented to demonstrate the utility of this framework as a guide for interventions aimed at engendering hope. Creating connections that enhance hope by using creative approaches with children, children sharing their hope work with others, and child-focused hope-based discussions with adults illustrate how the ecological approach can be used in resilience-building interventions with children and those in their social and cultural milieu.

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CHAPTER 2

Hope Lives In the Heart: Refugee/Immigrant Children's Perceptions of Hope And Hope Engendering Sources

Figure 1.0 Akinyi's hope story painted on a quilt

First I was in Africa and we had a war. They were killing people. Some people were carrying things on their heads like food and clothes. We traveled to XXX. From XXX we flew to Canada. When we arrived, we stayed in a hotel until we could find an apartment. After that, about a month, we went to school. When I finish university, I would like to become a doctor. (Akinyi, 14-year old refugee girl).

Akinyi, an energetic and friendly Canadian youth of African origin, currently lives with her mother and siblings in a mid-western city in Canada. However, less than four years ago, she was one of millions of displaced children because of war in her country of origin. On first looking at Akinyi's quilt drawing, one is drawn to the images associated with trauma, loss, and displacement -- stories that are all too familiar in the popular media. Yet this same picture takes on a new meaning when you learn that Akinyi drew this picture to illustrate a story of hope. Through the lens of hope, Akinyi's story maintains its horror, but other aspects of her experience emerge -- including survival, opportunities, and a future.

Akinyi is but one of many refugee and immigrant children within school and community settings who bring specific needs resulting from a unique culmination of stressors related to adjustment, language barriers, and possible prior exposure to catastrophic trauma. However, Akinyi's story illustrates the importance of viewing refugee children's stories holistically, paying attention to both the positive and negative aspects of the whole. Research related to successful outcomes under conditions of adversity has suggested that success encompasses relationships between risks, resources and contexts (McCubbin, Thompson & Thompson, 1995; Rutter, 1987). However, to date there is little research about how refugee and immigrant children maintain a hopeful outlook on life, while negotiating and interpreting their experiences during their early years of adjustment in resettlement countries.

This paper[1] focuses on refugee and immigrant children's views of hope and what gives them hope during their early years of adjustment. This early period is often associated with high stress in immigrant and refugee families (Beiser, Dion, Gotowiec, Hyman & Vu, 1995). Given that hope studies is a small, yet growing body of research, this study contributes to our knowledge of hope in children and adolescents, specifically refugee and immigrant children. After reviewing literature on newcomer children's adjustment and hope, this paper describes its use of creative approaches to engage children in an Early Intervention Program (EIP). Children's descriptions of hope are represented in two parts: as core experiences (the heart of hope) and as sources of hope. These findings are reflected upon in the context of the children's current lives and in the

[1] This paper represents a portion of a larger case study on hope and psychosocial adjustment in children from the perspectives of children, caregivers, and staff of a community-based program for refugee and immigrant children. The study's conceptual framework combined a developmental-ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) with research and theory on hope in children and adolescents

context of literature. This paper concludes with a number of implications for counselling and school psychology practice.

Refugee and Immigrant Children's Psychosocial Adjustment

Literature on the mental health of refugees and immigrants has grown in the past two decades, yet attention to the psychosocial adjustment of children in this population is limited (Beiser et al, 1995; Guarnaccia & Lopez, 1998). The literature presents a rather inconsistent picture of children's adjustment, with a major portion pointing to the prevalence of psychopathology (Almquist & Brandell-Forsberg, 1997; Hodes, 2000; Kinzie & Sack, 2002; Rosseau, Drapeau & Corin, 1996; Tousignant et al., 1999) and a few suggesting equal mental health to children in host countries (Guarnaccia & Lopez, 1998; Munroe-Blum et al., 1989).

Pre-migration literature focusing on the effects of war on children is heavily weighted on post-traumatic stress as an outcome (Berman, 2001), yet studies that employ more ecological or holistic frameworks show differences in responses to war based on personal factors as well as the nature, type, and duration of exposure to war-related stress (Walton, Nuttal & Nuttal, 1997). These differences highlight that pre- and post-migration experiences are extremely varied, and that there is a need for more information on what helps children adjust positively to their new home environments.

A number of researchers emphasize the need for broader approaches that recognize the interplay between various risk and protective factors that determine successful or difficult outcomes in refugee and immigrant children (Barwick, Beiser, & Edwards, 2002; Cole, 1998; Grizenko, 2000; Guarnaccia & Lopez, 1998; MacMullin & Loughry, 2000). Pre-migratory conditions such as exposure to war, and personal and

family resources, and post-migratory experiences, such as the response of the host country, all contribute to how well children adjust to their new homes (Athey & Ahearn, 1991; Beiser et a., 1995; Cole, 1998). While this literature provides the basis for holistic approaches to working with children, few studies present these experiences from the children's perspective.

Personal or subjective responses are particularly informative for understanding individual difference factors (e.g., personal resources) which are recognized in holistic models of psychosocial adjustment in refugee and immigrant children (Barwick, Beiser, & Edwards, 2002). Therefore, in addition to a holistic, contextualized perspective, personal subjective interpretations of pre- and post-migration experiences are also important in understanding adjustment in children. To provide a more balanced perspective on the current lack of literature on how children adjust after moving to a new country, this study uses hope as an additional framework for understanding children's experiences.

A Hope Perspective

Hope as one strength-based personal resource factor has predicted positive psychosocial adjustment for people ranging in age from childhood to middle adulthood (Benzein, Saveman and Norbeg, 2000; Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Snyder, 1995; Snyder et al., 1997). Developmental psychologist Erick Erickson (1982) writes that hope is an affective state born of children's early attachments to their caregivers. If children's emotional needs are met, they learn to trust, which gives them the ability to hope. Like Erickson, Smith (1983) maintains that hope is a prerequisite in adolescence for achieving a fulfilled adulthood. Based on their research with Canadian youth in a school setting,

Larsen and Larsen (in print) also concluded that hope appears to be an important and pervasive aspect of self during adolescence. In contrast to Erickson's view that relates hope to a fulfilling adulthood, Lynch (1965), Stotland (1969) and later Snyder (1997) postulate that hope is a cognitive process that can be learned in childhood and throughout the course of life.

Although hope has not been explored to date in refugee and immigrant populations, research and theory from this growing area of study suggests that hope contributes to positive adjustment in children in challenging situations. In fact the absence of hope or an orientation to the future is reported as a most distressing factor that leads to difficulties in adjusting for traumatized individuals (DSM-IV, 1994; Herman, 1992; Terr, 1991; Yule, 1998) and children affected by war (Walton, Nuttal & Nuttal, 1997; Rosseau, Galbaud du Forte & Corin, 2002). To date, studies of hope with children suggest hope to be essential for coping with adversity (Artinian, 1984; Baumann, 1993; Danielsen, 1995; Erdem, 2000; Herth, 1998; Hinds, 1988). Identifying external social support to help reduce stress and build hope is reported as beneficial to children undergoing bone marrow surgery (Artinian, 1984), children and adolescents living with cancer (Danielesen, 1995), and children surviving from burn injuries (Barnum & Snyder, 1998).

Strategies that children use to engender hope in Herth's (1998) study of homeless children include connectedness, inner resources, cognitive strategies, energy, and hope objects. A number of studies allude to the developmental nature of hope, with looking to the future evident more in adolescents (Artinian, 1984; Herth, 1998; Hinds, 1984; Parkins, 1997; Wright & Shontz, 1968). Qualitative methods to study how children

experience and understand hope often incorporate the use of art, including paintings and drawings (Baumann, 1993; Danilesen, 1995; Herth, 1998), sandplay (Erdem, 2000), and photo-assisted interviews (Edwards, 2002; Parkins, 1997). Findings from these studies suggest children's ability to hope contributes strongly to their ability to cope with challenges. These studies also show hope to have a developmental aspect. Therefore, methods of studying hope in children should be developmentally appropriate and child-centred, such as the previously mentioned creative art approaches.

Research Approach

In this study, Bronfenbrenner's (1986) developmental-ecological framework was used to guide a research approach that is holistic and pays attention to children's life contexts while recognizing subjective interpretations. Thus, refugee and immigrant children's perceptions of hope and what leads to hope were explored using a qualitative case study approach (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Case studies pay attention to the particular (Stake, 1998), and by concentrating on a single phenomenon or event, they seek to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the issue under study (Merriam, 1988). These holistic and contextualized (Yin, 1994) qualities of case studies are in keeping with literature that suggest how important it is to maintain a broad, context-based perspective in work with refugee and immigrant children.

Flexibility within case study designs allows a researcher to tailor data collection to the study's context and participants (Merriam, 1988). This study is unique in using creative methods for interviewing refugee/immigrant children to open "spaces" for them to express their current experiences. Van Manen (1994) encourages using creative approaches such as puppetry and drawing to learn about personal experiences from

children who may not express themselves well verbally or easily remember their experiences in traditional interviews. Likewise, in studying hope, researchers see hope as involving a creative process whereby stories and other creative methods help to provide information about hope (Jevne, Nekolaichuk & Boman, 1999) -- further affirming the benefits of using creative approaches to study hope in children.

Participants

The study involved 17 children (nine girls and eight boys) between eight and 18 years of age involved in a community-based early intervention program in a mid-western city in Canada. Participants lived in the country between one and four years at the time of the study and were conversant in English. All but three children originally arrived in Canada as refugees due to situations of armed conflict in their countries of origin[2]. The children came from Sierra Leone, Sudan, China, the Philippines and Iraq. There were three sibling groups (each with two children) in the project. Purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) delineated the case choice and the range in participants' ages and their ethnicities allowed for diverse perspectives and represented maximum variation sampling.

All children were born in their countries of origin and a number of them spent time in one other country under asylum before arriving in Canada. All children attended public schools in the city. Sixteen took English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. These children required extra help with their schoolwork because of difficulties writing in English and being behind their grade levels due to missed or interrupted schooling, the migration process, and social disruption in countries of origin. Because this study was

[2] The other three participants left their home countries due to political and economic reasons. While the term refugee is open to dispute, for the purpose of this paper, the term refugee is being used to distinguish children who not only left their countries with the belief they cannot go back, but were exposed to war-related violence in the process.

conducted towards the end of the six-month program, the participants included in this paper are those who attended regularly and completed all portions of the project. The final analysis of data was based on 10 core participants. Table 1.0 provides demographic information for the core participants.

Table 1.0

Demographic characteristics of research participants

Age (Years)	Females	Males	Sibling Groups	Single Parent	Without Parent	Refugee	Immigrant
8-12 Total 4	4	0	1	3	0	4	0
13-18 Total 6	3	3	0	1	1	3	3

Research Setting and Procedure

Housed within a non-government organization, the goal of this psychosocial program was to help refugee and immigrant children adjust in resettlement countries by creating a safe and comforting environment. Weekly after-school group programs ran during the school year for six to nine months and were designed to: (a) enhance trust, sense of safety, empowerment and belonging, (b) explore and teach affective awareness and communication skills, (c) enhance self-esteem, and (d) facilitate self discovery through self-expression.

Groups were run by staff with training in education, counselling, social work and youth/child work. One staff psychologist was available to work with children and families needing more individualized attention and support. Although it was known that participating children may have experienced trauma, the centre addressed concerns as they emerged or when a child felt ready, rather than imposing diagnostic labels and treatment plans. This made the centre an ideal environment for engaging in exploratory,

qualitative inquiries with children. Approaching the children in a program setting allowed us to spend time together and to get to know each other within a setting that was safe and familiar to them.

The Hope Project

My research activities began at the beginning of a six-month program on a January evening. During the first four months I attended weekly sessions as a volunteer, allowing me to establish a relationship with the children and their families. During this time, I was able to explain my research plans to parents. Most families in this program spoke English, but a cultural broker was available to explain the study and consent issues. My research activities were incorporated into the last 10 weeks of the program.

After sending a letter to all parents explaining the purpose of the Hope Project and the activities involved, and obtaining parents' verbal and written consent (and children's verbal consent), the children participated in a series of activities that also served as data-gathering events. One staff member helped prepare and implement activities. By the time the Hope Project commenced, the children were very comfortable with the program, with me and with each other. Because many of the children had a history of loss or difficulty, the staff psychologist was available to consult as needed during the entire study and afterwards. None of the participants reported discomfort as a result of research activities.

Data Collection

Working with two existing groups (ages 8-11 and 12-18), children participated in a series of workshops over a period of 10 weeks to explore their perceptions of hope and

what leads to hope. These activities began with a 40 minute group interview[3] where the children were asked to brainstorm what the word hope meant to them. My main input in this activity was to assure the children that all answers were acceptable and that hope can mean different things to different people. This seemed to relax participants so they did not copy each other or worry about right or wrong answers.

The group interview was followed by a series of creative arts-based workshops that also served as data-collection activities. These included making a collage, a story quilt making activity, and taking photographs -- all which required the children to explore personal descriptions of hope and what makes them feel hopeful. Following the collage and quilt-making activities, children were asked to write or dictate to the researcher what their work was about. A number of researchers (Cronin, 1998; English, 1988) maintain that the use of written data with visual imagery (e.g., photography) ensures congruence in determining the significance of the images to the context from which they were generated. Stake (1998) also explains that multiple methods and perceptions are used in case studies to clarify meaning, verify the repeatability of an observation or interpretation, and point out different perspectives, all of which contribute to trustworthiness. This approach also adds depth and breadth to the issue under study.

Photographs and Photo-Assisted Interviews

Photo-assisted interviewing was used to allow children to physically obtain information from their various life contexts and reflect on it in an interview format. Each child was given a 24-exposure (400iso with flash) disposable camera with instructions to take photographs of "things that describe hope to you" and "what makes you feel

[3] At the end of this opening activity, each child was given a scrapbook in which they copied or put any work conducted during the hope project as a keepsake. Large pieces of work such as collages and paintings were photographed by the researcher and returned to each child.

hopeful." Film was developed and individual semi-structured photo-assisted interviews (30 to 45 minutes each) were conducted. Children were asked to choose 12 of their most important photographs and describe each photograph. They were then asked to explain why it said something about hope and made them feel hopeful. Photographs also served as a basis to ask other questions regarding experiences and perceptions of hope as well as the sources of hope. This supports Schwartz's (1989, p. 120) perspective that "in order to benefit social research, the use of photographic methods must be grounded in the interactive context in which photographs acquire meaning."

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis were concurrent (Bassey, 1999) with material for analysis consisting of transcripts of group interviews, photo-assisted interviews and written descriptions of collages and quilt pictures. Using Collaizzi (1978) as a guide in thematic analysis, transcripts were examined as a whole, then coded into meaning units. After this, themes were established based on the similarity of content in the codes. A cross-case analysis was also made to identify common themes in the study. Throughout this process memos were used to search for patterns or consistency within certain conditions in both individuals and across the group. Two main themes emerged from the children's description of hope: (1) the heart of hope, as a core experience and (2) sources of hope, as processes from which children draw. Three sub-categories representing sources of hope were identified and a member check was conducted with participants as recommended by Collaizzi (1978). Rigor and trustworthiness were also attended to during this process by writing memos to clarify the meaning of results and personal perceptions, and consultation with my supervision committee.

Findings

The Heart of Hope

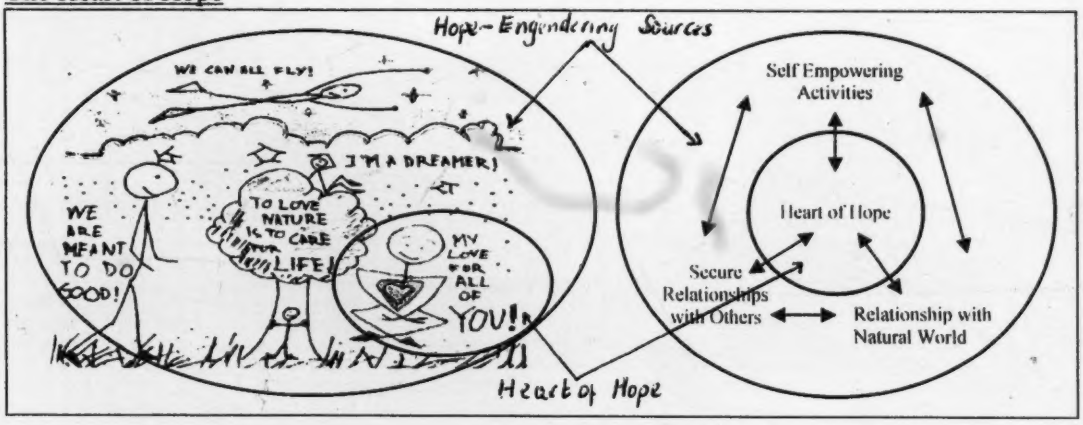
Hope-Engendering Sources
WE CAN ALL FLY!
I'M A DREAMER!
WE ARE MEANT TO DO GOOD!
TO LOVE NATURE IS TO CARE FOR LIFE!
MY LOVE FOR ALL OF YOU!
Heart of Hope
Self Empowering Activities
Heart of Hope
Secure Relationships with Others
Relationship with Natural World

Figure 1.1 Hope quilt painting and conceptual framework of hope and hope engendering sources.

From the start of the project, the children did not question the existence of hope. They indicated that hope is present and hope is important. However, talking about hope did not diminish areas of stress and difficulty in the children's lives. Children referred to numerous challenges including learning difficulties at school, loneliness, parental unemployment, and even wars in their countries of origin. They seemed to say that hope did not take the struggles away, but instead gave them the ability or motivation to cope. "Hope makes me feel I can do it if I try harder," was one 10-year-old girl's comment regarding difficulties with learning at school. "Even though there is darkness in our lives, hope is like the light side which helps us to face obstacles," was a similar comment from a 17-year-old boy.

Children's descriptions of hope as depicted in Figure 1.1 suggest hope to have two different, but related aspects. One part, named in this study as the "heart of hope"

seemed to be a core experience. Of the 10 children who participated in the photo-assisted interviews, nine described hope as being present in their hearts. Children had some difficulty articulating this aspect of hope, but were able to relay that it was within them and had an enduring presence: "hope never goes away" or "it can get bigger and smaller," were common responses. This part of hope comes from and lives in the children's heart. Another part of hope emerged in the children's descriptions of themselves and others involved in personally important activities in the present or directed to the future. These activities are a separate part of hope, but sustain the heart of hope and are referred to in this study as hope-engendering sources. For example, hope was seen when a teacher helps a child to read, when a person picks up litter in the park, and when a child learns to play a musical instrument; all three actions were described as doing something that enables hope in the person acting or being acted upon.

Hope-Engendering Sources

In addition to understanding the significance of hope for this group of children, perceptions of the sources from which they maintain or build hope was crucial to this study. Herth (1996) defined hope-engendering strategies as resources that serve to enable hope by facilitating the hoping process in some way. In this study I distinguish between sources and strategies. Hope-engendering sources are defined here as the processes from which children draw resources (Herth, 1996) that somehow enable the core aspect or heart of hope.

Table 1.1 shows one individual hope source (self empowering activities) and two relational hope sources (people and natural environment) that were identified in children's work. As illustrated in the arrows in Figure 1.1, these sources are not

independent, but are interdependent in the hoping process. All children described activities and experiences within each source that engenders hope, although there were differences in emphasis in the sub-themes that appeared to be developmental and contextual. For example, the younger participants did not refer to cognitive processes that involved goal-setting though goals were articulated by older children.

Table 1.1

Hope-Engendering Sources

Self Empowering Activities:
Cognitive Activities
Physical Activities
Secure Relationships with Important People:
Presence
Togetherness
Support
Relationships with Natural World:
Peace and Freedom
Belonging
Interdependence for Survival

Self Empowering Activities

This theme reflects individual activities as sources of hope -- cognitive and physical (energizing and calming) activities. It encompasses the various intrapersonal processes that were described as enabling children's hope when it was low, and helping children find hope when it seemed hidden. Children reflected a sense of empowerment derived from these activities as they described the various positive emotions emerging from engaging in these activities including feeling "happy" "good" "safe" and "excited." These positive emotions seemed to give the children a sense of success or power that fueled them towards further activity.

Cognitive Activities

Cognitive activities included remembering, goal-setting, problem-solving, reflecting, and using symbolism through images and word metaphors. The drawing on the hope quilt below (Figure 1.2) reflects the use of remembering and symbolism. Here an 18-year-old boy uses a United Nations food truck to share a personal hope story.

Figure 1.2 Hope story quilt drawing depicting UNHCR food trucks driving to a refugee camp.

Four older girls in the study referred to artists in the media as symbolizing their goals of becoming talented artists. These children chose artists with whom they were able to identify, such as those who came from large families, or poverty, or had a talent that they shared. In her collage, one girl talked about a singer who not only managed to rise from poverty, but also managed to extend her talents beyond singing to acting and entrepreneurship. Identifying with these artists seemed to inspire these young girls and perhaps suggested role for them.

Physical Activities

Children showed and described many physical activities that were sources of hope for them. These were divided into energizing and calming activities based on the descriptions of the activity and its perceived effect by a child. Examples of calming activities included lighting a candle, singing, drinking ice tea, listening to music, and

watching a person painting. One girl described lighting a candle to comfort herself when scared. Another talked about drinking cool liquids to calm herself, and another described holding stuffed animals (Figure 1.3) to comfort her when scared or unhappy.

Figure 1.3 Photograph of stuffed animals that are sources of hope by providing comfort.

Physically energizing activities included descriptions of dancing, riding a bike, and participating in sports such as soccer and basketball. A nine-year-old girl described her enjoyment of riding a bicycle when talking about her photograph in Figure 1.4. This young girl explained that she had tried to learn to ride in her country of origin but the bicycle had been too big and she had fallen. Now, much older and athletically inclined, she described riding her bike to school as "fun, safe, and soft" and "hope is like that." In other words, a physical experience was viewed as symbolic of hope.

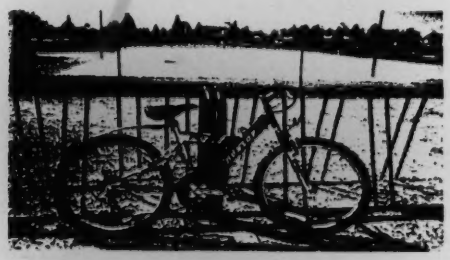

Figure 1.4 Photograph of a bicycle depicting an activity that enhances hope.

Secure Relationships with Important People

This theme encompasses a source of hope that is outside of the children but embedded in their interactions with people who are important to them. It is captured in a 10-year-old girls observation that "If you feel very sad and someone cares for you and makes you feel happy that means they are giving you hope in your life." During the interviews, I asked each child a question about a hypothetical scenario of taking a journey to a far land where people did not know anything about hope. The question was, "Which photograph, if only allowed one, would you take to help maintain your hope and teach people about hope[4]?" Of the 10 children, four chose photographs of their mothers, four chose pictures of friends, one chose a staff member's picture and one chose a picture relating to music. It became clear throughout this study that adults and peers (friends and siblings) with whom they had secure relationships were important sources of hope. Children's descriptions of how or why a particular person made them feel hopeful revealed that these secure relationships often involved a perceived sense of presence, togetherness, and support.

Presence

The importance of adults and peers being present when needed was described by all children in this study. Photographs from children of single parent families often portrayed mothers emphasizing that this was the most important relationship because of presence and availability when needed. Likewise, teachers at school and program staff were referred to as sources of hope with their presence having an impact on the children's ability to manage academics:

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[4] Adapted from Jevne (1991) and Jevne et al., (1999)

> But I really like her [teacher] because she is really nice. She always helps me when I need it. Like when we go for break she is still there if I need help. (14-year-old girl)

Children referred to the presence of siblings and peers in relation to feeling hopeful. One girl explained how her family was moving to a new part of town, but she did not want to leave her current school due to her reliance on the constant presence of her friends at school. Likewise, some children referred to the importance of having siblings present in this country given that other relatives remained in their country of origin. Presence of important people seemed to provide security in relationships.

Togetherness

Togetherness was reflected in children's descriptions involving hope in relation to other people, particularly in peer relationships. Children described the importance of playing, laughing, and having fun with peers (siblings, friends, and cousins) in relation to hope. These relationships were also described as reciprocal where there was a give and take that secured the relationships and sustained hope:

> The friends help with hope when you go together, eat together, laugh together, stay together. All help with hope. Like, if you have problem you tell him. If he have problem, he tell you, like share. That's good. Good friends, gonna be forever good friends. (17-year-old boy)

Support

The children also mentioned the role of adults and peers in supporting their adjustment to living in a new country. Accessing or having parental support in assisting with difficulties was of particular importance to the children, as passionately described by one girl:

> She [mother] is my very very hope. I like her so much... Every time I need something, like for school she always helps me or something. She always does

> good. Like if I am in trouble she will go to the school and fix it. Yah, She is really really good. (14-year-old girl)

Teacher and program staff's support and help were viewed as key in helping to learn new academic skills. Hope was felt when the support empowered children to realize they can accomplish something:

> Well, like when I don't know how to do something, she (staff) helps me. Like one day I was trying to do something on the computer and she showed me what to do and that was nice. And it made me feel hope that I can do something. (9-year-old girl)

Likewise, peer support seemed to play an important role in adjustment to life in a new country. Children referred to peers as building hope though their roles in sharing school culture and general rules of childhood games that may be different for newcomer children:

> They [friends] talk to me. Sometimes we got into trouble and they talk to the teacher and say she is like not knowing something and it is okay. They also teach me to play games. We play different games and I never seen them before. (14-year-old girl).

A number of children referred to family members who were not in this country, but who they recalled as instilling hope. One 11-year-old girl described her grandmother as an important person in supporting the development of skills associated with womanhood in her culture. Another youth talked about his grandfather who supported his education and gave him a wall-hanging (Figure 1.5) that he now uses to motivate himself to learn. These conversations evoked a hint of wistfulness in the children as they appeared to miss these key individuals who now remain as hope-filled memories.

Figure 1.5 Photograph showing a Chinese wall-hanging with hope-giving messages.

Relationship with the Natural World

This theme presents the natural world as a source of hope based on children's frequent reference to places, plants and animals in relation to their experiences of hope. Children's descriptions indicated that a connection with nature and places often evoked a sense of peace and freedom, belonging, and the need for interdependence to survive.

Peace and Freedom

Children's descriptions of places such as parks, forests, and objects such as trees evoked feelings of peace, relaxation, renewal, and comfort:

> The place …peace and grass all green, I want to sit there. The place give hope. You sit in a place like that, you can think and feel good. (18-year-old boy)

> I feel comfortable in nature…It is very peaceful. And sometimes I bring my CD …beside the river in the river valley and listen to music. (15-year-old boy)

One 17-year-old boy drew and described a peaceful place near the area where he was born (Figure 1.6) prior to it being damaged by war. This boy noted that hope for the natural environment can only be maintained with the ending of wars.

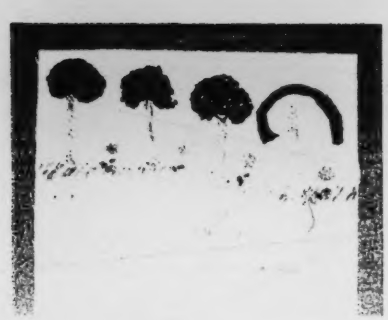

Figure 1.6 Hope story quilt showing trees in a home country before destruction by war.

Belonging

A sense of belonging in relation to nature was captured in children's frequent references to liking animals and wanting to have and care for pets and plants. Two children added that animals were sources of security. For example, a dog was described by one girl as good to have because she had seen a program about how a dog was able to save its owner who fell through the ice in a river. This interest in caring for nature, to own a living object and to ensure its stability, was captured by a 12-year-old girl's explanation of a picture of a flower pot:

> When I grow up, I hope to have a house with flowers…Well, I love flowers and we learnt plenty of things about plants and other trees and flowers and stuff, so I just want to take care of one, like it does not die. (12-year-old girl)

The need to have something to own and to care for suggested belonging to be related to the children's hope.

Interdependence for Survival

Interdependence for survival or a two-way relationship with nature was suggested in the children's descriptions of nature as providing them with the necessities of life. Children indicated they wanted to reciprocate by caring for nature to ensure its survival. In reference to his choice of water in his hope collage, an 18-year-old boy commented

that "the water always give the people life." In reference to a tree, an 8-year-old said "trees give fruit to eat." One 14-year-old girl painted a fish as part of her hope story to relay the importance of food for survival. The importance of an interconnection with nature was also generalized by a few of the older children to larger environmental concerns. One boy related how the war in his country was destroying vegetation and animals as well as people. Another boy noted the need for all people to recognize the importance of a connection to nature as life sustaining:

> To care for nature is to care for life because nature gives life to us. So we should take care of it because today some people destroy earth's trees. I think that is destructive to the environment because animals need the trees and birds and we need oxygen....I guess we have to get the message that to love nature is to love life. If you love life, then you should care for nature because it is universal – that's what nourishes us.(17-year-old boy)

Reflections

Reflections on Descriptions of Hope

The themes and images the children used in this study indicate that they see hope as a dynamic, enduring concept that is present within each of them (heart of hope). These themes and images also indicate that the children see hope in activities that are important to them and in relationships with others (people and nature) who are important to them (sources of hope). Herth (1998) described a similar view of hope from the perspective of homeless children, with an inner core that is always present and an outer flexible ring of directed (specific) hopes. This study's description of the heart of hope is close to Herth's core hope. Like the homeless children in Herth's study, children in this study identify hope as something that is deep inside of them, that also remains positive despite the many challenges they experience. However, this core part, together with the part of hope that is linked to sources (with intra- and interpersonal characteristics) is more similar to Benzein

et al's. (2000) description of internal (being) and external (doing) hope processes in their Swedish study. Thus, the results of my study show hope in refugee and immigrant children to be close in nature to these earlier studies. This description of hope shows particular relevance to Bronfenbrenner's (1986) emphasis on contextual and subjective elements that define children's experiences.

Reflections on the Sources of Hope

Looking at the children's descriptions of hope from the context of their pre- and post-migration experiences, the sources of hope described in this study take on an important significance. While not explicit in the children's dialogue, it seems that they were concerned about isolation considering the importance they placed on connectedness. During the member check session with the group of children, this need for connection was better understood when children elaborated on hope-hindering experiences of which loneliness, school and financial difficulties were common experiences. Thus, self-empowering activities and connections beyond themselves take on particular significance as sources of hope when understood from the context of experiences of loneliness, disconnection through many losses, and current difficulties.

Benzein et al (2000) notes that the "future" aspect of hope is risky (associated with uncertainty) and therefore to hope for something requires courage. When considered in the context of this study, the various empowering experiences and meaningful relationships likely give the children the courage that is required to maintain a sense of hope. This is close to Erickson's (1982) perspective that hope in children emerges from relationships that build trust. Herman (1992) elaborates that basic trust, which emerges from experiences of care, allows a person to "envisage a world in which

they belong, a world hospitable to human life (pg. 51)." In other words, having experiences that build trust gives individuals the courage to envision themselves in the present (and perhaps in the future) world. Therefore, rebuilding a sense of safety and control over one's life through re-connection to self and society are viewed by Herman as foundational in helping individuals who have experienced trauma and loss. Correspondingly, a sense of safety and empowerment are prerequisites for external expressions of hope by immigrant and refugee children who have experienced significant losses, traumatic experiences, and dislocation.

Children in this study described drawing hope from a variety of sources and directing hope to varied goals that appeared to depend on their circumstances. For example, while education was an important goal for many of the children, their current struggles with learning at school caused them to draw hope from areas where they were succeeding. This allowed them to re-direct their hope to include goals of becoming very good at sports, or to becoming an actress or musician. While children envisioning themselves as singers can be viewed as having unrealistic goals by concerned academic-focused caregivers or teachers, this dreaming can also be also viewed as an important step in a child's maintenance of hope. Herth (1998) describes this shifting of goals as a flexible part of hope in homeless children that can be redefined and refocused based on more immediate needs such as having adequate food. Likewise, Dufault and Martocchio's (1985) idea of individuals having the ability to maintain general hopes during uncertain times while redefining or putting on hold specific hopes is supported here. Thus, by redirecting goals, it is likely that the child's sense of power and sense of

security is preserved which in turn allows the child to cope better with the discomfort of not doing well at school until such difficulties are mastered.

Reflections on Hope and Resourcefulness in Children

My study's results highlight the tremendous resourcefulness of this group of children. This discovery of resourcefulness amongst an "at risk" population supports holistic approaches to working with children that take into account existing resources (Barwick, Beiser, & Edwards, 2002; Cole, 1998; Grizenko, 2000; Guarnaccia & Lopez, 1998). These children initiated activities that instill hope (such as singing and dancing) demonstrating how they readily assume and understand much about maintaining their own psychological well-being. Sources of hope that energized children were also reported in Herth's (1998) study with homeless children and Hind's (1988) study with seriously ill adolescents. My study adds to children's hope literature by including sources of hope that help to physically and mentally calm children such as lighting a candle, drinking ice tea, sitting under a tree or looking at a river. Use of these sources could well reflect the physical stress these children experience and manage further pointing to their own resourcefulness.

Children's resourcefulness is also seen in their repeated reference to playing, laughing and having fun as being associated with hope. The use of humour to sustain hope during times of uncertainty is supported in the literature with children (Herth, 1998) and adults (Jevne, 1991). Early years of adjustment in resettlement countries is regarded as a period of high stress, yet children are generally viewed as able to adapt better than their parents due to their ability to learn new languages easily. My study suggests that the maintenance of emotional well-being while negotiating the stresses of adjustment can

be facilitated in children's natural inclination towards play. Play as an activity contains all the ingredients (humour, creativity, imagination and mastery) that are associated with connection to self and others. These are used therapeutically in play therapy with children experiencing trauma, loss and adjustment difficulties (James, 1996).

Reflections on the Reciprocal Nature of Hope

The three sources of hope identified in this study appear to be reciprocal and interrelated. That is, a connection to people or the natural environment can provide motivation to engage in self-empowering activities. A feeling of empowerment in turn can fuel further activity that results in stronger connections to others. For example, the youth who talked about his grandfather being a source of hope by supporting his education while in his country of origin, now uses a wall-hanging his grandfather gave him as a hope symbol that motivates him to learn. The nine-year-old girl who described feeling hope that she "can do something" after being taught how to use a computer by supportive program staff also described a feeling of hope when she was helping a young friend to read. In both examples, drawing hope from one source seems to provide the motivation to engage in other activities that engender hope.

Reciprocity is also identified within hope sources where children's relationships to people and nature were associated with togetherness and interdependence. The reciprocal nature of hope has not been a major focus in the hope literature, but has been identified by Benzein et al (2000) and mentioned by Barnum and Snyder (1998). The reciprocal nature of hope sources and processes supports ecological perspectives of child development that recognize the interactions between internal and external human environments in contributing to growth (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) and supports literature

that calls for more holistic perspectives on working with refugee and immigrant children (Barwick, Beiser, & Edwards, 2002; Cole, 1998)

Reflections on Nature as a Source of Hope

Both Herth (1998) and Baumann (1993) found references to nature in their studies of hope with homeless children. Unlike these previous studies, my study gives explicit recognition of connectedness to nature as a source of hope. Giving meaning to places and objects in the natural environment, crated important links with the environment to engender hope in the children. Children's interaction with their natural environment can be conceptualized as a form of spirituality. While two children explicitly referred to God as an important source of hope, the natural world was also described in the same terms as a provider and source of security. My study suggests that the children who referred to God specifically were from homes where their families were involved in a religious community. Erickson (1982) considers this connection to the environment (and larger universe) as a mature form of hope involving a sense of cohesion regarding what is meaningful to life. A sense of connectedness to nature also implies a moving from focus on self and other people as sources of hope, to sources often associated with spirituality. Spirituality as a source of hope is referenced in pediatric (Baumann, 1993; Erdem, 2000; Hinds and Martin, 1988) and adult (Farran, Herth, and Popovich, 1995) studies but not in terms of the natural world.

Study Limitations and Future Research

Findings from this study are specific to a group of children enrolled in an early intervention program and therefore the presence of hopefulness and the perspectives shared should be understood with this context in mind. Given the importance of

connectedness, being part of a group is likely a significant source of hope for these children. Children outside of the program may not produce similar results. The children in this study are drawn from four main ethnic groups and so results may be dissimilar to other ethnic groups. Likewise, these results are limited to children who were not exhibiting active or more severe emotional or behavioural difficulties. Future research could expand the current study to explore hope with larger numbers of children with more diverse ethnicities, and in other settings such as schools. A longitudinal study of interactions between children and important people such as parents would also provide valuable information about the process of hope fostered in relationships over time. Finally, the role of the natural environment as a source of hope in children is not understood well and thus further study is warranted to provide a basis for recognizing its importance in children who are in transition.

Implications for Counselling and School Psychology Practice

Current findings have relevance for individuals within counselling and school psychology practice as well as individuals who work in community settings. The association of sources of hope with a sense of security and empowerment supports the importance of interventions that aim to assist children who have experienced loss and other adverse events. First, the process of talking about hope, in itself, allows a child to begin the process of accessing strategies to enhance hope and build resilience. Therefore, exploring hope can be used as an intervention to empower a child and build safety and trust in the child's relationship with the adult thereby providing a base for further work.

Second, understanding the sources from which children learn about themselves that are also hope building can be used intentionally in facilitating a sense of safety and

self-empowerment that can be disrupted by migration stresses. Similarly, when struggling in school, hope seems to be drawn from non-academic sources such as sports to maintain a sense of empowerment. Therefore, in addition to providing support for academic learning, practitioners may engender hope in children by promoting the importance of engaging in activities that help children to feel energized, to feel grounded, to develop friendships, and excel in other ways – all of which are important for adjustment in resettlement countries and development in general. More specifically, practitioners can support academic learning by accessing in-school and community-based academic tutoring and peer support. Practitioners can also foster connections that reduce isolation and loneliness by linking children to community resources such as existing sports leagues and other recreational programs. Finally, practitioners can incorporate energizing and calming activities within a counselling context and also encourage a child's participation in such activities in other settings.

Final Comment

This study sought to contribute to refugee and immigrant literature by exploring children's perceptions of hope and hope sources which contribute to adjustment during early years of resettlement. Indeed, much research is needed to enhance the work of professionals who are involved directly with the growing numbers of refugee and immigrant children in countries like Canada. While this study involved a small group of children, it does provide a strengths-based method for working with similar groups of children that could be used by teachers and counsellors alike. These sources of hope described here could also be used by teachers, counsellors and parents to reflect on their current practices and as hope building strategies with children. An understanding and

awareness of hope, in turn, allows practitioners to build on existing strengths and to work with children and their families in a culturally sensitive, child-centred, holistic way. A key factor in this approach is that it pays attention to the ecology of the children's lives and their personal interpretations of their experiences, thereby giving children a chance to tell their stories and voice their opinions as captured in some of the children's messages to people who may not know anything about hope :

> Hope is good. If you don't have hope, how are you going to feel happy? If you have not seen anything you like, you can think about your hope and you might remember that "I love this!" ...You can draw a picture or you can put it in your house and anytime you remember that, you feel your hope.
>
> Hope is like almost like getting anxious sometimes. It is like you are so anxious to get something but you don't know if you will have it. And hope is something that is in the future. And hope is something that is very special and it is what you want to hope for. It is like you are the person that owns it.

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Figure Captions

Figure 1.0 Hope story painted on a quilt

Figure 1.1 Hope quilt painting reflecting perception of hope and hope-engendering sources

Figure 1.2 Hope quilt story depicting UNHCR food trucks driving to a refugee camp

Figure 1.3 Photograph of stuffed animals that are hope enhancing by providing comfort

Figure 1.4 Photograph of a bicycle depicting an activity that enhances hope

Figure 1.5 Photograph showing a Chinese wall hanging with hope-giving messages.

Figure 1.6 Hope quilt drawing showing images of trees before destruction by war

CHAPTER 3

Nurturing Hope in Refugee Children During Early Years of Post-War Adjustment

Sitting across from Halima, her eyes are very large and glisten as she talks with passion about how she, a former refugee from Somalia, became involved in working with immigrant and refugee families in the early intervention program. Describing her own experience of having to work from the "bottom up," and at times feeling hopeless and wanting to return to her country and relatives, Halima reflects on how the hope she managed to maintain now fuels her work with refugee and immigrant children and their families. This passion drove Halima with another co-worker to create a homework club for youth who are struggling in schools. It also lead to her work as a multicultural community broker. Sitting across from Halima, she seems to embody hope, a fire shining in her eyes as she teaches me how she works to nurture hope in refugee and immigrant children despite the many challenges. (Journal Entry, May 2003)

Media stories of extremely devastating events from various parts of the globe remind us of the constant threat of physical and psychological trauma faced by children and their families. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR, 2003), there are over 20.5 million people worldwide who are of concern to the agency. Individuals and families who escape as immigrants or refugees from difficult situations often face secondary stressors in resettlement countries, in addition to psychological distress brought on by war-related trauma. With growing numbers of refugee and immigrant children from known areas of conflict and associated risks, resettlement countries have begun to recognize the need for more services aimed at assisting individuals and families through the early years of resettlement (Cole, 1998; Kaprielian-Churchill & Churchill, 1994).

Despite this awareness, there remains a paucity of literature to better equip professionals who provide services and supports to improve refugee and children's mental health. This includes both a focus on addressing past difficulties and trauma as

well as facilitating the formidable challenges of adjustment to their new home country. Ideas for appropriate solutions can emerge from stories of children and families who manage to cope and remain hopeful despite the many challenges. This perspective is inspired by Martin Seligman's (1998) reflection that preventing serious disorders and building strength, resilience and health in young people can be done by promoting the competence of individuals. Exploring perspectives on engendering and hindering hope is one such approach.

In this study, staff of an early intervention program for refugee and immigrant children shared their observations of children's experiences during early years of adjustment in a resettlement country. The study focused on perceptions of experiences that engendered and hindered hope in the children, and ways in which staff viewed their own work in nurturing hope. Within community settings, frontline workers like Halima in the previous vignette can offer unique perspectives on children's adjustment during early years of resettlement, based on their own cultural awareness and personal experiences as refugees or immigrants. Specifically, this study's research questions focus on how *staff view hope in refugee and immigrant children, what they perceive as engendering hope, and what they see as the barriers to a child's ability to be hopeful.* Following a brief review of the literature on refugee children's well being, human ecology and hope perspectives are introduced as guiding frameworks. The research method includes a portrayal of the early intervention program and use of a case study approach. A description of results follows, including what staff conceive of as hope in the children, what they perceive as challenges that hinder hope, and finally, how they view their work in nurturing hope. The paper concludes with a discussion of the importance of hopeful

orientations for helpers, how hope is nurtured in the context of caring relationships, and cultural awareness in work with refugee and immigrant children.

Fostering Refugee Children's Well-Being

Literature on refugee children and those affected by war reports the presence of Post Traumatic Stress disorder (PTSD) and other psychopathology resulting from war-related trauma and other stressful pre-migratory experiences (Clark, Sack, & Croft, 1993; Kinzie & Sack, 2002; Arroyo & Eth, 1996; Espino, 1991). Yet it is also known that not all refugee children go on to develop debilitating mental health difficulties as a result of difficult experiences before they move to another country. A number of factors are recognized as influencing a child's response to traumatic experiences, including the nature of the experience, intensity of the trauma, speed of onset, social preparation, secondary stressors, repeated exposure, and traumatic reminders (Almqvist & Brandell-Forsberg, 1997; Pynoos, 1996). How children respond depends on their personality, emotional development, state of mind, existence of previous mental health problems, autonomic regulation, coping skills, and social and familial support (Turkel & Eth, 1990). This recognition of the interplay between numerous factors has resulted in calls to view trauma and adjustment in children from holistic or ecological perspectives. In other words, children's responses are understood from the vantage of their developmental level and life contexts (Eth & Pynoos, 1985; Gabriano & Kostelny, 1996) and larger socio-cultural context (DeVries, 1996; Rousseau, Drapeau, & Corin, 1997; Wessels, 1999).

Within refugee and immigrant mental health literature, secondary stressors associated with migration, relocation, and adjustment are often referred to as post-migratory stress. Secondary stressors associated with migration in particular are not well

understood in terms of their connection to prior stressors and contribution to ongoing adjustment difficulties. However, post-migratory experiences are speculated to have a greater effect on refugee and immigrant children's mental health during first years in resettlement countries, and therefore pose a threat to future adjustment (Barwick, Beiser, & Edwards, 2002; Beiser, Turner, & Gansan, 1989).

The seemingly clear link between PTSD and ongoing adjustment difficulties is seen in children with known pre-migration experiences that involved severe personal impact through rape, torture or other war-related personal violence (Beiser, 1990). Pynoos, Steinberg and Goenjian (1996), who have worked with child victims of violence and natural disasters, have noted that secondary stressors such as relocation, stigmatization, immigration and resettlement:

> (1) Increase the risk of comorbidity; (2) complicate efforts at adjustment; (3) initiate maladaptive coping; and (4) interfere with the availability of social support, family functioning, and reintegration with peers (p. 341).

The above research points to the relevance of research that focuses on psychosocial adjustment within early years of resettlement. While the role of pre- and post-migratory experiences on positive and negative adjustment in children is acknowledged, there remains little knowledge as to how individuals working with children negotiate these experiences to help children adjust in resettlement countries. This research seeks information on how important individuals in children's social milieu intervene and facilitate adjustment to their new country homes. The approach is based on a human

ecological framework[1] that recognizes children, their environments, and their relationships as impacting change and growth.

An Ecological Approach

Athey and Ahearn (1991) and Walton, Nuttall, and Nuttall (1997), in their work with children affected by war, also maintain that these children cannot be understood independent of their environments. This approach is influenced by the work of Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1986) who maintained that children's development and ultimate growth is based on an interaction between their inherited genetic make-up and environmental factors. Thus individuals working with children need to take into account children's family factors as well as other systems that impact their life ranging from schools to larger political policies (e.g., child welfare laws).

In addition Bronfenbrenner discusses the important role of adult relationships in child development. Positive development is said to take place when a child engages in increasingly more complex activities on a regular basis with one or more persons with whom the child develops a strong mutual emotional attachment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The following section on hope literature sets the stage for the use of a hope lens within an ecological framework in this study.

Hope and the Helping Relationship

Hope is identified in various professions including nursing, medicine and counselling as key in coping, overcoming adversity, and living under uncertain and stressful life experiences (Bruhn, 1984; Cousins, 1989; Farran, Herth & Popovich, 1995; Jevne, 1991; Snyder & Mann Pulvers, 2001). Caregivers and people involved in helping

[1] This paper reflects a portion of a larger study that employed a similar human ecology framework combined with a hope perspective to gather information relating to psychosocial adjustment in newcomer children from children, staff, and parents in an early intervention program.

professions play an important role in building and maintaining hope, which contributes to an individual's healing or adjustment to life changes (Couch & Childres, 1987; Ersek, 1992; Frank & Frank, 1991; Herth, 1990; Jevne, 1993; Snyder, 2000). Within psychotherapy research, hope is referred to as a core feature that contributes to changes and psychological well-being in clients, in part due to the role of therapists (Snyder, Michael, & Cheavens, 1999). Marcel (1962) noted that hope can only exist when there is interaction between a giver and a receiver. This connection becomes the foundation of caring relationships where hope is reciprocated and spread to others. Farran, Herth, and Popovich (1995) who conceptualize hope as multidimensional, view this as the relational aspect of hope.

Although the importance of adult relationships in fostering hope has been found in research (Artinian, 1984; Hinds & Martin, 1988; Danielsen, 1995; Parkins, 1997), the role of adult caregivers in engendering hope in children has received little study. Snyder's definition of hope as a "cognitive set that is based on a reciprocally derived sense of successful agency (goal-directed determination) and pathways (planning of ways to meet goals" (1995, p. 355) has application to adults working with children. In *Hope for the Journey: Helping Children though Good Times and Bad*, Snyder and colleagues (1997) outline how adults can raise hope in children by teaching goal formation, modeling problem-solving, and inspiring agentic thought. These studies and literature provide a foundation for the importance of adult relationships during challenging experiences, yet little is known about how adults perceive hope in children or how they work to influence hope in children.

Individuals who work with people who have experienced trauma and loss in their lives report hope-building to be a key component of healing (Brohl, 1996; Herman, 1992; Wessels, 1999; James, 1996). In fact, a sense of foreshortened future and loss of hope has been found in research with traumatized children in the United States (Terr, 1991) as well as children affected by war (Walton, Nutall, & Nutall, 1997). While these authors point to the need for hope-focused interventions with children, there has been little work within the trauma literature that specifically examines this subject. No published research to date explores hope in immigrant and refugee children from the perspective of adult helpers and how they nurture hope in children.

Method

Research Setting: The Early Intervention Program

Established 10 years ago, the Early Intervention Program (EIP) is one of a number of programs a community-based non -government organization offers for immigrant and refugee children in a large mid-western Canadian city. The EIP was initially established to complement a specialized clinical and support program for refugees and immigrants who had survived physical and psychological torture and trauma often associated with war and political experiences.

Over the years, children (between ages six and 18-years) from various ethnic groups, including Somalia, Cambodia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, have participated in weekly, after-school, psychosocial and psychoeducational activities. The goal of the program is to create a safe and comforting environment for refugee and immigrant children (who are deemed at risk due to traumatic experiences before moving) to support healing, growth and adjustment to Canada. Groups are run by staff and volunteers with a range of

background/training. The program also employs a staff psychologist who is available to provide more specialized and individualized support to children and families as needed.

A review of program documents showed that a four-year retrospective evaluation of the program (from 1995 to 1999) concluded that it was successful. This was based on participants' reported enjoyment of most activities, their reported socialization and play with friends, and their ability to interact with staff and volunteers. A focus group conducted in November 2002 had educational cultural brokers[2] identify a number of strengths/community assets that the EIP immigrant and refugee children and their families possessed. These included determination, eagerness to learn, presence of hopes and dreams, and a sense of family responsibility.

Challenges identified for children between six and 18 years included lack of relevant role models, intergenerational conflicts, cultural adaptation difficulties, and the lack of previous education. Clearly the program represented a unique place dedicated to enhancing the lives of refugee and immigrant children. As such, it was a setting from which other practitioners working with refugee and immigrant children could learn from context-based research.

The Program Activities

Over a period of six months, I participated in EIP activities as a volunteer assisting staff in their weekly activities. During my participation, registered participants were experiencing difficulties with adjustment and, all had been in Canada for less than four years. After-school group meetings ran every Tuesday evening for three hours.

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[2] A group of individuals representing various ethnic groups in the city who were employed by the organization that hosted the Early Intervention Program. These brokers served as a bridge between families (including those in the program) and schools.

Each evening began with free activities such as board games and home-work assistance, followed by a more structured activity that varied depending on the theme, such as *Who am I*, *Family*, and *Respect*. Structured activities varied from arts and drama-based activities to group discussions and computer time.

The following illustration provides an example of one weekly activity that focused on "respect." The staff had been dealing with conflict between the children involving name-calling and the activity appeared to be an intervention. The activities began with a staff member reading *The Zax* (Geisel, 1961), a Dr. Seuss book. After discussing the story and how it tied back to the idea of respect, the children were provided with material to make puppets. Upon completion of the puppets, the older children (groups of three) created short stories with their puppets that showed what respect looked like. With lots of giggling, a group of boys showed a story of how a new puppet person was teased at school because of his blue hair and orange beak-like nose. Alone, the puppet was sad. The story was then repeated again with the same puppet being befriended instead of mistreated. "That is respect" one of the youth told me. "How?" I asked. "I don't know. You just don't be mean to a guy like that when you respect."

Once a month, staff planned a community-based activity (e.g., a picnic) with all family members and arranged transportation for everyone. Parental attendance at these events varied with more attendance at indoor activities and during the warmer months. These events provided me with opportunities to meet and talk with parents who often were busy attending English language or post secondary training, or working or caring for other children. Each week, attendance ranged from 14 to 25 children with an average

of 16 per evening. All but four of the 25 children in the program had migrated from countries experiencing war.

Case Study Approach

Given the literature's emphasis on holistic approaches to working with refugees and immigrants, a qualitative case study methodology was deemed appropriate given its focus on obtaining both contextual (Yin, 1994) and interactive features (Merriam, 1988) of an issue or event. Representing the convenience type of purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990), the participants in this study were a group of seven (one man and six women) staff working in the EIP and five (two men and three women) educational cultural brokers. Of the 12 participants[3], nine had migrated to Canada within the past 10 years, seven as refugees and two as voluntary migrants. The two remaining staff had vast experience working within cross-cultural settings both within Canada and overseas.

Data Collection

During my six months in the program, I kept a field journal of personal perceptions and observations. I also conducted two 60-minute, semi-structured group interviews with staff (five participants) and one 90-minute group interview with cultural brokers (five participants). In addition, two 60-minute, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with two staff members not present during group interviews.

Group interviews with staff were conducted in the middle of the program and two months after the end of the program, thus allowing staff to reflect on the year's work and preliminary results. The group interview with cultural brokers was also conducted at the end of the program. In qualitative case study research, it is common to analyze data

[3] The ethics review board of my university faculty approved the research procedure and verbal and written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

while it is being collected to assist with organization and to allow for an emergent design (Bassey, 1999). It was through this approach that cultural brokers were identified as important information sources.

Data Analysis

After taping and transcribing all interviews, Collaizzi's (1978) method was used to guide a thematic analysis using the following steps: (1) reading each transcript as a whole several times and paying attention to specific words, (2) reading texts again and highlighting significant sentences or phrases (meaning units), (3) paraphrasing the significant statements or phrases, (4) clustering the paraphrases into themes, and (5) pulling together related themes into larger themes based on shared meanings or relatedness. A final step involved a cross-case analysis comparing individual-derived themes across all transcripts to produce even broader themes. This final step involved comparing emerging results with observations made in a field journal, and as themes emerged, with theory.

Memos were made throughout the data collection, analysis and writing process to assist with interpretation. Stake (1995) refers to this latter process that incorporates multiple sources of data as triangulation, which serves to enhance trustworthiness of study results. Other methods used to ensure trustworthiness and representation of participants' experiences included delineation and attention to personal perceptions through memos and the use of multiple participants (staff and brokers). Member checks were also conducted with participants to ensure satisfaction of my interpretations of their narratives. Initially three themes that describe how staff view hope in the children and what they consider hope-hindering and hope-engendering experiences were identified.

As main themes emerged, ways in which staff thought they nurtured hope in children were also identified as a sub-theme of hope-engendering-experiences.

Results

During my first group interview with staff, the image of hope being like *a seed* already present in the children arose. One staff member described her work as that of a hope *gardener,* and this image was subsequently taken up by other staff. The following section honours this metaphor by weaving it into the theme headings. Three themes were discovered that represent how the staff see hope. These include: (1) Hope is like a seed, (2) Invisible seeds: Some challenges that hinder hope, and (3) Visible seeds: Some experiences engender hope. Specifically, how staff viewed their work as nurturing hope is described as "growing seeds" of hope. These results are then discussed within the context of literature, personal observations, and the program.

Hope is Like a Seed

It became apparent during the individual and group interviews that the staff of this program identified hope as an overall constant in the children. In turn, staff felt that hope was essential to their work as well as to the lives of the children with whom they worked. As one staff member put it, hope was not only key to successful adjustment to life in a new country but to motivation in general:

> It makes a big difference because children who have hope, they see a light in their life and then they work hard. They really work hard towards that hope and that goal and feel okay I have to really work hard to reach there. But if you don't hope or a have goal to work towards, you don't see any future, so think, "I will just don't bother."

In fact, a number of the staff seemed surprised by the presence of hope in the children, given their many challenging experiences:

> The fact that they get up in the morning and they continue to try. They are struggling with school yet they continue to go to school. If there was absolutely no hope, they would find all kinds of reasoning not to go to school. They come here too. If there was absolutely no hope, there would be no reason to come here.

The staff articulated a strong belief in the existence and the importance of hope in the children's lives. This seemed to be a foundation on which staff based the meaning of their work. Its relevance became increasingly important as participants described the many challenges faced by children and their families during early years of adjustment.

Invisible Seeds: Some Challenges that Hinder Hope

It has been said that to recognize hope, one must at times highlight the hopelessness (Farran, Herth & Popovich, 1995; Menninger, 1959). This indeed seemed to be the case in this study where often discussions began with participants wanting to express the challenges faced by children and their families that could prevent hopefulness. Hope was viewed as low or not visible to staff when a child seemed to withdraw or was disconnected from group activities. To staff, this type of behaviour was often thought to stem either from learning difficulties at school and within the program, or from conflict with peers within the program and difficulties at home. Brokers identified similar difficulties (and referred to them as "challenges to hope" faced by children and their families) with the addition of a number of broader society-based difficulties. Challenges that hinder hope are presented (Table 2.0) in four areas of the children's lives that were identified by staff and cultural brokers through their contact with program families.

Table 2.0

Challenges that Hinder Hope
Home-Based Challenges:
Parent Unemployment & Financial Difficulties
Family Structural Changes
Parent Status Inconsistency
Marital Discord & Parent-Child Conflict
Parent Stress
School-Based Challenges:
Language Barriers
Gaps in Education/Lack of Success at School
Child Isolation and Loneliness
Cultural Clashes & Identity Confusion
School Program Limitations
Societal-Based Challenges:
Perceived Prejudice and Racism
Refugee Experience
Program-Based Challenges:
Limitations of Program to Meet Family Needs
Small Staff and Lack of Volunteers
Limited Parent Involvement
Staff Preparedness to Address Trauma

Home-based Challenges

Due to unemployment and associated financial difficulties, home-based challenges were frequently associated with parental stress. Brokers elaborated on the presence of stress from status inconsistency in parents who had professional careers in their countries of origin but were not able to transfer credentials and obtain similar work. This was viewed by brokers as having a significant impact on men particularly from patriarchal cultural groups. Associated issues were the structural changes that took place within families where women worked while men remained unemployed. This contributed to marital discord in a number of communities. In fact, brokers reflected that

while single parents were also experiencing significant difficulties adjusting, the absence of spouses eased some of the stress due to the absence of marital conflict.

Amongst the older youth, staff noted parent-child conflict associated with bi-cultural parenting as another factor that can impact hope. That is, parenting styles that were different from mainstream Canadian practices created tension between children and their parents. Such family conflict was also viewed in terms of the youth feeling unsupported by their parents as they struggled to integrate into new school cultures.

School-based Challenges

Staff and brokers reported children's school-based challenges as language barriers, gaps in education and lack of success in school, isolation and loneliness, cultural clashes and identity confusion, and limitations in school programs. Lack of success at school due to gaps in education was viewed as a significant challenge and burden in many of the older children and youths' lives that caused hope to appear buried deep in some children and remain invisible to outsiders.

In addition, school systems that presently offer only English as a Second Language (ESL) training were seen as unable to effectively deal with children who, in many cases, were too old to study at their grade level yet were functioning lower academically than their peers. In such cases, school programs were not designed to address the particular academic issues of children whose education had been severely disrupted by the many effects of wars in countries of origin.

Amidst these challenges, staff and brokers recognized that children have to negotiate the challenges of living in a new cultural milieu. One cultural broker described

the confusion of sorting out one's identity and place of belonging within the Canadian cultural milieu:

> Who should they follow? Should they follow the Canadian mainstream or somebody from their race or are they going to follow the religious flow? Say, for example, somebody is black. Do we imitate somebody who is black and their way of life in this country or should he imitate his core religious people or the mainstream religious people?...You see the confusion that they are living with. So they don't know if they want to be a Sudanese Canadian Christian or a Black Canadian and start to imitate the way of the Blacks here. For the Muslims, should they follow their religious leader or the American Muslim way of life? This is a huge problem that they are having.

Societal-based Challenges

Cultural brokers also identified prejudice and racism as a larger societal issue that can indirectly hinder children's hope. Brokers reflected on their personal experiences to illustrate how prejudice can impact future employment opportunities or achievements. One broker shared a story where he was working with a family from a middle-eastern country where the father had changed his children's names to reflect those of the mainstream host country to ensure that they "did not suffer" like he had. Forced migration was another broad issue that could impact hope indirectly. In this case, families did not have a choice in their decision to leave home, which increases the stress of adjusting during early years of settlement.

It should be noted here that while staff and brokers acknowledged the impact of traumatic experiences on children and families, post-migratory stressors were identified and elaborated upon more so in terms of their impact on the children's ability to feel hopeful. When asked about their views on pre-migration trauma experiences, cultural brokers raised the issue of bias based on one-sided information that focuses on limitations of refugee and immigrants within current society. One broker expressed concern about

how one-sided information may impact the perspectives of service providers (such as teachers) whom children and families are dependent upon. Staff on the other hand, did focus on children's trauma and losses as possibly impacting hope after they began to hear more from the children over the course of the program.

Program-based Challenges

In reflecting on the year's work, staff highlighted a number of issues that are presented here as program-based hope challenges both for staff and (thus potentially) as indirectly affecting children within the program. A number of staff shared personal concerns about feeling unprepared to manage some of the emotional or behavioural reactions in the children that were viewed as reflective of past-trauma histories. Staff noted that as they worked hard to create a safe environment and trusting relationships with the children, the same ingredients of patience, listening, and responsiveness resulted in the children opening up and sharing stories involving personal loss and trauma. One staff member described hearing a child's trauma story as helping her to better understand the child and to appreciate that the child felt comfortable to talk. However, at the same time, she felt herself overwhelmed by the content. Another staff member mentioned feeling unprepared and somewhat apprehensive of her own response when she would hear similar stories. In such cases, staff alluded to the fact that nurturing hope has a flip side where staff need to be prepared to face despair. In fact, to help sustain their own hope, program staff had received ongoing support from their staff psychologist.

Limited resources within the program at times posed a challenge to working with the children. With few staff and a lack of volunteers that year, staff described often being

exhausted by the end of the evenings. Having few staff limited one-on-one time with children thereby reducing opportunities to observe examples of hope in a child's life.

Despite the program focus on the children, staff were also aware of the difficulties that parents experienced and recognized that, at times, separating the needs of the children from their families can be challenging. Staff lived with the knowledge that they were sometimes limited in what they could do to help the children and families feel more hopeful. Staff often had contact with parents regarding the children's program activities but would have liked to have more understanding of families to help children. By adding a monthly family night, the staff hoped to strengthen child-family relationships, but this was activity was only used by a few of the families over the course of the program. Thus connecting with families and enhancing their well-being was seen as a potential challenge to their work.

Visible Seeds: Some Hope-engendering Experiences

Staff members reflected that hopefulness in children was visible to them in areas where children felt successful. This often included non-academic activities such as sports and performing arts such as dancing and music. Hope became visible to staff during the activities they set up, where the children were encouraged to tackle new learning and, in doing so, overcome fears of the unknown. Hopefulness in the children was described during these times by staff as "energy" coming from the children that was not present before the activity. One example was during a tobogganing trip:

> Staff 1: When I think of the winter sledding where 75 percent of the group had never been sledding before, suddenly they are having that experience and they are laughing and there is lots of energy that is exerted and it is almost like planting hope that "I can survive in these crazy winters."
> [Laughter]
> Staff 2:In [this city] there is hope!

> Staff 3:I was watching them the first time they went down the hill with their feet digging into the snow trying to go slowly and in the end they were flying

Hope was also visible to staff in moments when they observed that the children felt supported by their family members or the staff. Evidence of the presence of hopefulness in a child during these times was in their actions and words that showed a child has a goal and is motivated to pursue it as captured by one staff member:

> ...the way that I started to think (there was hope) was when I talked to one of the older girls. I asked what type of summer classes do you like and she said "writing and reading"...[Laughter]...For me, I felt happy because it is not normal to want to spend your summer to learn more writing or reading... She told me she likes learning to read but she can't so she is interested.

Hope was evident also when the child is engaged in an activity and is persisting even though the task may be difficult. One staff shared another story of hope where she had observed two children struggling together to read a Dr. Seuss book that had been used in a previous program activity. Although they struggled, both children seemed to be taking great joy and pride in being able to read the book. "There was a little bit of hope there," reflected the staff member, based on her observation of the children's interest and desire.

Despite the presence of many barriers, when hope was visible, staff encouraged its manifestation. For example, one staff member shared a story where a youth she was working with, was severely traumatized and quite suicidal. The youth was able to identify that playing soccer was an activity that would be important to him. Thus, with the help of other staff members, the youth was registered in a local soccer league where he seemed to be transformed over a few weeks from a person who was on the verge of total despair to the beginning of a more hopeful outlook. Another member shared a similar story where a young person she was working with who was on the verge of

dropping out of school identified that she was interested in singing. Again, with the help of others in the girl's life, she was registered in a local singing group that she attended with great enthusiasm while she continued counseling sessions with the staff member.

In both examples, the staff noted that the youth they were working with did not state that such activities would enhance their hope, but the staff recognized this implication. It was in the areas where children experienced difficulty that staff felt the need to help the buried seed to grow. Using staff stories and reflections, the following themes emerged as ways they facilitated the growth of seeds of hope in an attempt to make them more visible in the children's lives.

Growing Seeds of Hope

Reflecting on their own role in the growing, nurturing and maintenance of hope, staff responses were captured in four sub-themes: *Patience and Time; Encouragement; Responsive Action; Personal Commitment and Self reflection.* These four sub-themes reflect ways in which staff worked to create experiences that engender hope and are subsequently referred to as ingredients that help seeds of hope to grow. First, staff recognized *patience* and *time* as important ingredients in their work with refugee and immigrant children due to the various pre- and post-migratory experiences that set them apart from mainstream children. For example, one staff referred to the length of time it takes children to catch up academically due to gaps in education:

> It might take more years (to reach post-secondary training) than the kid who started Kindergarten here, but also I am trying to walk with her, to take those tiny baby steps with her.

Another example is the length of *time* in terms of the impact of the staff's work with the children. Regarding the latter, staff noted the importance of building trust and getting to

know the children by listening carefully and being *patient* in relationship building, all which contribute to the growth of hope as aptly described by another staff member:

> My biggest tool is to have a lot of patience and to be willing to very closely listen It takes the willingness to really listen and really watch, and they will tell you.

In addition to trusting the value of time, the importance of having patience with the child and patience in the process was seen as key in nurturing hope as it allows children to proceed with adjustment at their own rate.

The second ingredient to grow hope that staff reflected on was the importance of *encouragement.* Staff supported children by recognizing their work and helping individuals to feel special in the program. By helping the children discover their own talents and encouraging them, staff believed that they could enhance self-esteem and empower the children to take on other challenges, thus allowing hope to become visible in areas where it was buried:

> It [encouragement] helps to raise their self esteem and helps them to feel good about who they are…So if they feel they are good, they are going to have hope that they can continue to be good.

The third ingredient to nurture seeds of hope was staff's descriptions of their own *responsiveness* upon really listening and paying attention to the children. This responsiveness came in the form of actions that were geared to the individual needs of the children they were working with as described by two different staff:

> My job is to find the path that it is easiest accessible for them.
> It was very clear that he was into sports and he wanted to play soccer and it took us a lot of work to make it happen.

> So long as she has that hope, that little light she sees, I now was able to get her into the singing classes she wanted.

In many cases, this took effort and work outside program activities, but staff used their connections within the community to assist children to realize their expressed hope(s). Within the group setting, I observed staff arrange for youth to train for and obtain their first jobs in local fast-food restaurants. By encouraging and assisting the realization of the children's expressed hopes, staff in turn saw this as maintaining or drawing out the visibility of hope.

Finally, in listening to staff reflecting on the reasons why and how they do their work, it became increasingly apparent that their *personal commitment* to the children and *reflection* on their personal experiences were part of the process of nurturing hope. Through their stories and conversations, staff often shared their own life experiences involving resilience and hope. The following descriptions capture this important staff characteristic:

> If you enjoy working, they have hope. If you don't enjoy work with the children, it is difficult for them to get hope... So when you enjoy talking to them, they feel loved and they can change. They get hope.

> So I'm just trying to do small amount of …just to be part of their life in that program and hopefully, eventually at least, we can help some of them to reach their goal. Also to create awareness, talking to more people that there is a problem, there is a need with the children.

In summary, staff described four aspects that are important in working with children to allow the seeds of hope that are buried within them to grow and become visible. Patience, responsive action and encouragement can be viewed as particular approaches, while personal commitment and self-reflection are more personal traits.

Discussion

Hopeful Orientations in Helpers

Despite the many challenges that can make hope seem invisible, the staff of the EIP believed in the presence of hope in the refugee children they worked with. This hopeful orientation is a key finding in this study as it sets the stage for understanding how staff work to nurture hope amidst the seemingly multiple barriers faced by children and their families. Based on staff descriptions of how they nurture hope, this hopeful orientation appears to involve personal traits of the helper and utilizes a child-centered approach to working with children. Program staff seemed to draw on literature, personal experiences and stories from other individuals that confirmed their beliefs about the resilience and potential in children. They also relied on the power of positive attributes within themselves to have an impact on the lives of the children. Although counselling literature has references to hope and the importance of maintaining and restoring hope in children, there has been little research on front-line workers' actions or values that assist children to maintain hope. Therefore, this study adds to the literature by providing an example of a hope-focused orientation for working with refugee and immigrant children.

This study suggests a hopeful orientation as an important quality in the helper that will foster hope in children, particularly when combined with an understanding of what children perceive as encouraging hope. In another aspect of this study involving children's perceptions of hope, secure relationships with adults such as parents and staff members of the program were found to be important sources of hope (Parkins, 2004). From the children's perspective, important adults were viewed as helping hope by being present when needed and by supporting their mastery of new activities. On the other hand, staff in this paper describe a particular orientation towards interacting with the children that is child-centered, responsive, and honouring of the individual child's needs

and abilities. When viewed from both perspectives, it becomes increasingly clear that hope can be nurtured in relationships that are ongoing, supportive, and responsive.

Similar child-centered attributes are discussed as important in literature on work with traumatized children (Brohl, 1996; James, 1996). However, this work does not discuss the role of a hopeful orientation as an important quality in the helper in contributing to therapeutic gains. This study provides support for the notion that staff become external sources of hope and that their presence, support, responsive actions, and personal commitment (i.e. hopeful orientation) all give children a sense of security, opportunities to feel empowered and hope.

Another aspect of a hopeful orientation lies in the characteristics of the helper. In discussing the value of and instillation of hope within group counselling, Yalom (cited in Couch & Childres, 1987) identified hope as a personal characteristic in effective group leaders. Yalom believes hope is instilled in clients through the leader's ability to express hope through recognition of client resources, a strong belief in the effectiveness of what leaders do, personal confidence, and the use of themselves in the therapy process. These areas are similar to present study results of staff belief in the existence of hope in children and their belief and personal commitment to their work despite the many challenges. As such, this study calls attention to the important role of the presence of hope in front-line workers.

The findings of this study also suggest the importance of being child-centered through the identification of time, patience, and listening to children as crucial characteristics of hope building. The hopeful orientation observed in this study is similar to Jevne's (1993) description of hope-enhancing frames for work with individuals with

chronic illness. Such frames, she notes are open, constructive, realistic, and allow for the appropriate use of hope-enhancing strategies. Among others, Jevne named strategies such as communicating caring, listening to patients' stories, and making something happen, as good strategies for building hope and this study came to the same conclusion in the context of work with refugee children.

Hope Nurtured in Contexts of Caring Relationships

Current results support previous studies that point to the importance of adult relationships in sustaining of hope in children going through difficult experiences (Artinian, 1984; Danielsen, 1995; Herth, 1998; Hinds & Martin, 1988). Snyder, Michael and Cheavens (1999) maintain that therapeutic relationships and settings within which therapy occurs often foster agency thinking in clients. In addition, in therapy there are often goals and actions that enhance "pathway thinking" in clients which together with "agency thinking" results in the activation of hope processes. In other words, the presence of a caring therapist and therapy activities nurture hope by providing clients with strategies and the determination to achieve goals.

Snyder (2000) observed a similar process outside of therapy in research with high-hope adults. These individuals had adult role models (such as a coach) who spent quality time with them during childhood, helped with the formation of goals, and served as an inspirational source of agentic thought. Snyder's perspective on hope mentorship has parallels within this program setting. For example, the relationships fostered by EIP staff suggest they may have a similar influence on the children's hope. Staff sharing of their own experiences as newcomers can inspire children as they adjust to this new country. Also, the various actions staff take in response to children's individual needs

(ranging from job training to singing lessons) can model how hope can be accessed through different pathways. In addition the program focus on creating a safe and trusting environment, together with program activities, particularly those that are developed in response to children's expressions, are understood by staff as helpful in nurturing hope. The development of hope in children through adult relationships is also reflected in Bronfenbrenner's view that child development is influenced by interactions with adults (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998).

After identifying hope enhancing strategies from the perspective of terminally ill adults, Herth (1990) put forth a framework and strategies for use by nurses to create internal and external conditions that foster caring relationships between patients, families, and professional caregivers. A unique feature of my study is that the program's goals and activities were designed to create an external environment to foster trust and safety through the development of caring relationships between staff, children and their families. These same ingredients became the foundations of nurturing and building hope in the children. While Herth's suggestions were for nurses working with the terminally ill, her descriptions of strategies based on caring relationships were similar to this study's findings. In other words, the importance of active listening to create visions of hope, encouraging clients in their expressed hopes, giving support and guidance, facilitating a caring environment, and providing resources to express beliefs and practices were all mentioned by staff in the program. Activities in the program and staff descriptions suggest that caring relationships that foster hope are also relationships that build trust.

Culture in Context of Challenges that Hinder Hope

Staff and brokers identified many challenges faced by immigrant and refugee families that were similar to those identified within the literature discussing post-migratory stressors (Cole, 1998; Guarnaccia & Lopez, 1998; Kaprielian-Churchill & Churchill, 1994). Similar challenges to hope were identified by adult Pakistani immigrants (Kauser, 2000). However, family structural change as another source of familial stress and marital discord is new in this study. Participants reflected on a cultural basis for these difficulties, with more incidence of stress due to women working while men are unemployed especially in traditionally patriarchal communities. In addition to the many losses associated with migration and refugee experience, the loss of status within one's profession, new community and even family was seen by cultural brokers as a significant contributor to psychological stress for many men. It is suggested here that individuals from groups with different cultural views on gender could interpret Canadian mainstream culture as being hostile towards men while accepting and inviting of women. This can have particular impact on the psychosocial adjustment of parents who view themselves as sources of hope for their children through their ability to model cultural standards of success.

These subtle and complex cultural factors cannot be separated from the broad challenges that have been identified here. For example, the large issue of unemployment during early years of settlement (Beiser, 1990) in many refugee and immigrant families results in more psychosocial difficulties. The breakdown of family (immediate and extended) relationships is understood by those working with refugee children as an important factor in reducing hope for the children they serve.

Limitations and Future Research

This study was based on participants of a single program and therefore reflects the activities and issues in the context of this program and the life context of those attending the program. This study is exploratory, as the issue of hope has never been explored with staff of an early intervention program or in relation to refugee and immigrant children's adjustment.

There are many avenues for further research including a similar focus on hope in children from the perspective of parents and teachers, both groups whose roles have been raised as important and strongly connected to the children's hopefulness. A similar study based within a school setting would provide more detailed information regarding refugee and immigrant children's experiences of hope within schools where they spend a majority of their time outside of home.

Finally, in investigating hope challenges, further research with couples where wives are working while men stay at home is needed. The impact of structural changes on marriage and the perceived support for women and not men in a new host country could well be having an impact on men's identity and contributing to individual and family stress.

Implications for Practice

Although counselling literature has references to hope and the importance of maintaining and restoring hope in children, there has been little research on counsellor actions or values that assist children to maintain hope. This study adds to hope as well as refugee and immigrant mental health literature by delineating a hope-focused orientation for working with children. Child-centered approaches that staff used to

nurture hope can be used by practitioners working with migrant children in different settings. Staff seemed to state their important role of trying to foster hope that can be hidden by challenges in children's lives. However, their only sources of evidence were external manifestations of hope through children's overt behaviours. By evidence of this study, practitioners can add to this approach by asking children directly about hope and assist them in exploring their hope by using child-centered creative approaches with them. Staff and other professionals who utilize the hope-nurturing characteristics of patience, encouragement, responsive action, personal commitment and self-reflection described in this study are well on their way to creating space in their practices for hope to become more visible to them, and more importantly, to the children with whom they work.

The recognition of staff personal traits in contributing to hope suggests the importance of attending to and supporting the helper's hope as part of engendering hope in the lives of the children they work with. Likewise, engendering hope in practitioners is raised as an important issue in this study. Individuals working with this population or similar multiple-need groups are at risk of experiencing compassion fatigue or becoming burnt out by the nature of the work and the lack of resources to meet all needs (Figley, 1995).

Importantly, the recognition of strengths and a hope-focus does not imply the ignorance of difficulties. Therefore, it is important to prepare practitioners for managing children's pain, grief, and stories of trauma and loss so they can also nurture hope in children and staff. Staff need to be prepared to manage trauma, so ongoing training to better empower staff for their work is essential. Like other self care activities, nurturing

one's own hope is particularly important in the context of work with multiple-barrier families and those with histories of trauma and significant loss.

Closing Reflections

Staffs' belief in the existence of hope as a factor that seemed to allow the children to persist was a key observation in this study. This belief seemed to give the staff hope to persist despite the challenges inherent in their work. Whether referred to as hope or as a "spark," as indicated by one staff member, this force, this glimpse of life despite the past and beyond present challenges and situations, seems to be a strong connector between the children in the program and the staff who work with them. For this reason, finding hope amidst the barriers and challenges of working with multi-barrier families is integral to the process of helping with resettlement and adjustment. Therefore, a focus on hope could well serve as a basis to begin exploring solutions that work for staff and for children and their families. In closing, I share a story by one of the EIP staff that aptly captures this paper's theme of finding ways to nurture seeds of hope amidst experiences that engender and hinder hope.

> *Norah, one of the program staff, told me a story of having planted a rose bush in the summer of 2001. On September 11, the day terrorists highjacked American airplanes and crashed them into two city buildings, Norah had been watering her rose bush. At that time, Norah had decided to continue watering and caring for the rose bush, as it seemed to be the only thing to do. Two years later, Norah continues to care for and nurture growth in refugee and immigrant children despite the seemingly multiple layers of challenges in their lives. Nurturing hope, I believe is like that. It helps us at times to focus on the present, on what is in front of us, to break down the seemingly huge and impossible global tasks of justice and peace into making a difference in our immediate lives and those around us. (Journal Entry, September 11, 2003)*

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CHAPTER 4

Creating Connections to Enhance Hope and Resilience in Refugee Children

The potential space between baby and mother, child and family, between individual and society or the world, depends on experience which leads to trust

D. W. Winnicott, 1971

It is a warm summer evening and I am ending a photo-assisted interview with 10-year old Clara[1]. Three weeks earlier, Clara and a group of 17 children involved in an Early Intervention Program were given cameras to capture images in their lives that made them feel hopeful. Now, Clara has excitedly shared with me images from home, school, and community that are currently important to her ability to experience hope. During the past 45 minutes we have laughed, giggled, sat in silence, sung and have both been moved by Clara's images, explanations, and stories. Clara is about to talk about one of the last photographs when she stops, her voice catching in her throat, as she sees herself with clear shining eyes and a beautiful smile spread across her entire face. The photo shows Clara with her arm around one of the program staff of the early intervention program. A choked sound comes from her and at first I think she is crying. She is holding her hand over her mouth and her shoulders are shaking as she suppresses a giggling sound. I notice the tears in her eyes and soft expression on her face as she looks at the picture with a mixture of recognition, surprise, and joy. Is this a hope-full moment I am witnessing? After a while, I wonder aloud what the smile evident now on her face is about. As would be expected from a child her age, it is difficult for her to fully describe the mix of emotions experienced in the past few minutes, yet she clearly has a new energy about her and a confident look of newfound awareness. "I like my pictures," is all she is able to say first, then after a short silence, she elaborates "People help me here a lot at the centre and school. And I think that is cool...I am very happy."

This paper presents a hope-focused application with refugee and immigrant children that is informed by the human ecology theory. Its goal is to illustrate how attending to the human ecological approach, one can learn how to build hope in refugee

[1] Clara is a pseudonym used to protect the child's identity.

and immigrant children and those in their social and cultural milieu. First, this paper makes explicit the relationship between hope theory and Bronfenbrenner's human ecology theory. Second, it provides an example of a hope project[2] where the research process was informed by Bronfenbrenner's human ecology theory. Finally, aspects of the methodology and observations from this project are provided to illustrate how hope applies in light of a human ecology theory.

Research with refugee children, particularly those from places where there is armed conflict or political oppression, parallels that of other childhood trauma research and focuses on identifying psychopathology (Ajdukovic & Ajdukovic, 1993; Almqvist & Brandell-Forsberg, 1995; Kinzie & Sack, 2002). This is important empirical information, yet many suggest this research overemphasizes examining the effects of trauma with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as the main outcome (Berman, 2001; Bracken, Giller, & Summerland, 1995). There is little published research on how children from war-torn or politically oppressive countries adjust positively to their new homelands (Barwick, Beiser, & Edwards, 2002). With calls for more appropriate and culturally relevant methods for helping this population adjust, the need to better understand what is helping refugee and immigrant children during resettlement is crucial. A better understanding of children's successes and failures holds the potential to contribute to both theory and practice on this subject (Beiser, Dion, Gotowiec, Vu Nhi, & Hyman, 1995).

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[2] Using the positive, solution-focused language found in hope literature (Jevne, Nekolaichuk, & Boman, 1999) to understand psychosocial adjustment, a group of 17 refugee and immigrant children were asked to explore what hope is for them and to describe what makes them hopeful. With the ecological framework in mind, perspectives on children's hope as well as what engenders or hinders hope were elicited from both children and parents. During the course of the study, a number of observations and findings were made that suggest the potential usefulness of this process as a way to enhance hope. Given these findings, this paper integrates theory with research results and a focus on application.

For example, the previously described encounter with Clara illustrates how exploring hope through photography and conversation allowed me, as a researcher, to better understand what helped this young girl adjust to a new country. At the same time, Clara appeared to catch a glimpse of herself in one of the photographs and, through the reflection, seemed to gain a new self-awareness. This became more apparent to me as I later reflected on other parts of the interview, other conversations we had over the last six months, and other work she produced during that period. Having recently moved from a war-torn country and refugee camp, clearly there were many stressful experiences and losses in this young girl's life. As she settled into her new life in another strange, new place, Clara was able to identify the presence of hope in her life as well as factors and experiences that enhanced hope and helped with the adjustment process. Hope was possible for her even though she was dealing with other stressful transitions such as adjusting to a new culture, climate and language.

This paper responds to the current gap in the literature by beginning to integrate hope and human ecological perspectives in order to provide an approach for working with refugee and immigrant children. It may also inform those working most closely with refugee and immigrant children, such as parents, teachers and settlement workers. A systematic review of the published literature found no studies to date that employ a hope perspective within an ecological framework to gain insight into adjustment with refugee and immigrant children.

An Ecological Framework

Literature on refugee and immigrant children suggests that they cannot be understood separate from their pre- or post-migratory life contexts that relate to culture, families, risks and protective factors (Berman, 2001; Cole, 1998). A non-deterministic view of human behavior that sees behaviour as the result of multiple, complex, person-environment exchanges over time rather than a single event is found within human ecology literature (Bogenschneider, 1996; Nash & Fraser, 1998). Literature in this area broadly defines human ecology as the study of humans, their environments, and the way they interact as contributing towards human development and human functional outcomes (Steiner, 1995; Visvander, 1986; Westneyer et al., 1988).

Within developmental psychology, a similar ecological perspective is found in Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1986) theory of human development, often referred to as the *bio-ecological theory*. Bronfenbrenner views the term ecology as referring to the range of situations in which people are actors, for example, the roles they play, the predicaments they encounter, and the consequences of their encounters (cited in Cole & Cole, 1996). A key component of this theory is its attention to person, process, context, and time.

Bronfenbrenner's scheme[3] illustrates the various environments that influence child development and demonstrates how each level is reciprocally related to its neighbour. For example, individuals are influenced by their families and also influence their families. This is particularly noticeable in new parents where they are key in caring

[3] This ecological approach sees children in the context of the various daily settings they inhabit (microsystems). The mesosystem represents how various settings are related to one another, which in turn is linked to other settings and social institutions (the exosystem) in which the person may not be present but is still influenced by. Finally, all sub-systems are organized in terms of the culture's dominant beliefs and ideologies (the macrosystem).

for their infants who, in turn, dramatically change their parents' lives and self perceptions. Parents' behaviour at home is influenced by their experiences at work and in their communities, while the society in which the community exists shapes and is shaped by its members. Indeed, it is the fusion of subjective (personal factors) and objective (environmental factors) experiences that strongly influence development during the formative years from early infancy to young adulthood.

These reciprocal interactions between an active, evolving individual and persons, objects, and symbols in the external environment are termed "proximal processes" and are said to be the "primary engines of development" (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Examples of enduring forms of interaction (proximal processes) are reading, learning new skills, and group or solitary play. Such objective elements of experience contribute to development through processes of progressively more complex interactions that occur on a regular basis over extended periods of time (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994).

Bronfenbrenner notes that for younger children in particular, this interactive process over time generates the ability, knowledge, motivation, and skills to engage in similar activities, such as play or reading, both with others and alone. However, the energy that drives the proximal processes (engines of development) is said to come from deeper sources that emerge from subjective elements of experience (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). In other words, interactions between people and their environment are strongly influenced by individual or personal factors such as feelings of anger or happiness.

Personal perception and experience play a key role in the subjective elements of experience that contribute to development. Experiences, such as interactions in early

childhood relationships, produce emotional impacts which emerge in early infancy and continue throughout childhood affecting how people relate to themselves and others. Subjective elements of experience are also applied to activities one engages in, and are characterized by both stability and change. Research points out that positive and negative subjective forces emerging from the past can also contribute strongly towards how a person develops in the future (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Bronfenbrenner does not discuss hope in detail, but mentions it as an example of a subjective element of experience. Hope, like despair, anger, or love is viewed as a powerful emotion emerging from within a person and acts as the "fuel" that drives interactions between people and their environment (i.e. proximal processes).

Thus hopefulness as a subjective element of experience can be key in a child's ability to engage in meaningful activities that in turn contribute to psychosocial development. For example, in her study of hope in refugee and immigrant children, Parkins (2004) found hope was engendered during early years of resettlement by engaging in self-empowering activities and relationships with important people. The implied links between hope, engaging in meaningful activities, and personal growth in Bronfenbrenner's theory suggest that hope may also assist with adjustment processes in the aftermath of or during stressful life experiences.

Research in nursing, medicine and psychology indicates that hope is crucial in coping with adverse events (Farran, Herth, & Popovich, 1995). Based on this body of research, hope is used intentionally in counselling and psychotherapy to assist people in healing, recovery, and life transitions (Dufrane & Leclair, 1984; Edey & Jevne, 2003). Therefore, Bronfenbrenner's ecological view shows potential as a broad framework for

understanding hope and the various areas that may cause a person to feel overwhelmed, discouraged, or disempowered. His view is relevant also in the context of interventions that seek to understand and alleviate life challenges.

Three aspects that emerge from hope research are highlighted here as showing promise for the combination of human ecology and hope perspectives: (1) hope is contextualized, often embedded in our personal experiences and life contexts, (2) hope is nurtured in reciprocal relationships, and (3) hope is dynamic involving action and personal appraisal of actions. The following section elaborates on these points. These aspects of hope bear relevance in work with refugee and immigrant children, specifically with interventions aimed at engendering hope in children by strengthening connections to themselves and to people within their milieu.

Hope is Contextualized and Embedded in Personal Experience

Jevne and Miller (1999) reflect that we hope because it is "essential to the quality of our life – as essential as is breath to physical existence" (p. 10). What these authors explain is that when we hope, we are able to keep going regardless of what life offers us. With hope, individuals can find meaning, begin to see a future, and cope with losses and other life challenges (Marcel, 1962).

Such findings about hope have emerged from theology, psychology, medical literature, and even philosophical writings that recognize the dialectic nature of hope meaning hope is often experienced in situations of both adversity and success (Baumann, 1993; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby & Rehm, 1997; Frankl, 1984; Herth, 1996; Hinds & Martin, 1988; Snyder, 1995). These studies show that hope emerges from various life contexts through personal interpretation and expression, regardless of life circumstances.

Like Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective, hope studies point to the significance of attending to people's environments and personal interpretations to better understand their experiences. Therefore, ecological and hope-focused perspectives are relevant in understanding and working with immigrants and refugees whose adjustment can be hindered by pre- and post migratory stressors.

Hope is Nurtured in Reciprocal Relationships

Hope has been viewed as a relational process, as something that occurs between people in the context of relationships. Marcel (1962) noted that hope occurs between people when inspired by love. Miller (1989) observed that hope is compromised when we feel that nobody cares. Erickson (1982) postulated that early relational experiences of trust between children and their caregivers develop hope and later influence psychosocial development. The relational aspects of hope are further demonstrated in the important role of nurses and caregivers in instilling and maintaining hope by demonstrating caring, being present, and offering encouragement to their patients (Herth, 1990; Hinds, 1988; Hinds & Martin, 1988; Jevne, 1991, 1993). Farran, Herth, and Popovich (1995) observe that the relational attributes of hope are key in enabling people to "make it" through difficult life experiences (p.10).

Qualitative research exploring hope with children and adolescents shows connectedness to others as playing an important role in enhancing hope (Baumann, 1993; Herth, 1998; Parkins, 1997, 2004). Parkins' (2004) study with immigrant and refugee children expanded this aspect of hope to include the importance of reciprocal relationships. For example, children in Parkins' study referred to associations with peers where there was a give and take that secured the relationships and sustained hope.

Bronfenbrenner also highlights the importance of relationships. According to his bio-ecological theory, subjective responses such as hope or despair can have a powerful influence on human interaction which, in turn, impact development. The relational aspects of both hope and the ecological perspective point to the importance of attending to hope in relations and the usefulness of interventions that foster relationships thereby impacting hope. This appears to be specifically important in creating connections between children and important people in their lives.

Hope is Dynamic involving Action and Personal Appraisal of Actions

Hope has been described as a dynamic, active process in which people remain connected to life through focused activities (Pruyser, 1968) and are willing to take small steps towards dealing with particular situations or meeting personal goals (Jevne, 1993). Dufault and Martocchio (1985) describe hope as having a particularized sphere that encompasses hope that is dynamic and can change according to individual needs and circumstances. This active part of hope has typically been described as a cognitive or rational thought process which includes goal setting (Snyder, 1997) and "maintaining a rational or mindful approach" when responding to life challenges in order to remain "grounded' (Farran, Herth and Popovich, 1995, p. 9). Another view of hope as an active force can be seen in the creative processes associated with hope. Individuals who are able to hope, despite past challenges and unknown outcomes, are said to do well in life as they engage in a creative imaginative process that allows them to see beyond boundaries and live without absolutes (Lynch, 1965).

Refugee and immigrant children discussed by Parkins (2004) described various self-helping strategies that reflect the active part of hope under the theme *connecting to*

self through self-empowering activities. These hope-engendering strategies were also reciprocal in nature because hope seemed to initiate action and, as an outcome of the various activities, served to fuel further self-directed activity. As the human ecological perspective shows, people engaged in regular interactions with the external environment over time are shaped by such connections (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). This active aspect of hope fits well within the ecological perspective and is relevant for use in interventions that use interaction and reflection. More specifically, engaging in activities focused on hope over a period of time, will have an impact of the experience of hope, according to Bronfenbrenner's theory.

The following section briefly describes the research project and then summarizes three important aspects of the study that: (1) illustrate the systemic or ecological nature of the activities and (2) demonstrate their use as ways to engender hope. Creating connections that enhance hope by using creative approaches with children, children sharing their hope work with others and child-focused, hope-based discussions with adults illustrate how the ecological approach benefits resilience in refugee and immigrant children and those in their social and cultural milieu.

The Hope Project

The Hope Project took place in a community-based, Early Intervention Program (EIP) located in a mid-western city in Canada. This weekly, after-school program was part of a non-profit organization's community strengthening program designed to target refugee children between ages six and 18 who were deemed to be in high-risk, high-need, multiple-barrier communities. With the consent of the program staff, for six months I participated in the multi-ethnic groups. These groups participated in a variety of

psychosocial activities,[4] with the goal of creating a safe and comforting environment for refugee and immigrant children in order to support healing, growth and adjustment to Canada.

Seventeen children (ages eight to 18 years) from 12 families participated in the Hope Project, which ran for10 weeks during the EIP with one staff member acting as an assistant to help with the activities. Children had lived in the country between one and four years at the time of the study and could speak English[5]. All families except for three had arrived in Canada under refugee status. Countries represented in this study included Sierra Leone, Sudan, China, the Philippines and Iraq. All children were born in their countries of origin and a number of them had spent time in one other country under asylum before arriving in Canada.

In keeping with an ecological perspective, information regarding the children's hope and adjustment was gathered from the children and the individuals involved in their lives (e.g., parents and staff of the EIP). Children were asked to "describe what hope is for you" and "describe what makes you hopeful." This information provided a window into what was relevant and meaningful about hope for the children involved.

Initially, literature from human ecology and Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of child development was used to establish a case-study approach to creative data collection methods. However, a number of important observations were made during the course of the study that encouraged me to consider Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological

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[4] Groups were run by staff who had training in education, counselling, social work, and youth/child work. Staff included refugees and immigrants who have undergone similar experiences of adjusting and building a new life in a new country. The program employed a staff psychologist who was available to provide more specialized and individualized services to children and families as needed.

[5] Parents who participated in a group interview and conversations with me spoke English. A number of parents (although they gave consent for their children's participation in the study) did not participate because of limited time due to work and caring for other children. Parents and educational cultural brokers provided an invaluable cultural and social context to my work with their children.

theory more deeply, as a potentially useful guide for ways to enhance hope both in children and those in their lives.

Exploring Hope in Children

The Hope Project began by engaging children in a series of workshops to orient them to the concept of hope and introduce them to the project and its associated art-based activities to explore hope. Although there is no single definition of hope, the literature generally suggests hope to be a way of thinking, feeling, and behaving (Farran, Herth, & Popovich, 1995). Children were told that hope can mean different things to different people and were encouraged to develop their own definitions.

Activities took place in two groups (8-12 years and 13-18 years) where children explored hope and how hope is enhanced by using collages, drawings, paintings, and photography. These creative approaches were particularly relevant since hope is associated with creative processes (Lynch, 1965) and these activities are considered developmentally appropriate for eliciting information in children this age (Van Manen, 1994). Individual explanations were written or dictated by children to explain their work. Two group interviews and one individual photo-assisted interview was conducted with 10 of the 17 children[6]. Interviews took between 30 to 45 minutes and were later transcribed and analyzed thematically to generate descriptions and ways to engender hope.

Using Photographs

One component of the study used photography to engage the children. Each child was given a disposable camera with 24 exposures. They were instructed to take pictures of anything that described hope to them and made them hopeful. The use of photography (in keeping with the ecological framework) allowed children to step away from the

[6] Individual interviews were conducted with children who attended all activities.

parameters of the program centre and explore hope in the various contexts of their lives. Photography has been used in research with children and adults (Gastkins & Forte, 1995; Ziller, Vera, & Camache de Santoya, 1981; Ammerman & Fryrear, 1975; Bach, 1993; Weiser, 1988; Fryrear, Nuel, & White, 1977; Savedra & Highley, 1988) but not intentionally within an ecological framework.

Children's photographs depicted images taken in their homes, schools and classrooms, after-school care programs, parks, and neighbourhoods. This demonstrated that the children found and experienced hope in many settings. A thematic analysis of photo-assisted interviews showed hope to be engendered through connections to self, others, and objects in the natural environment. Each child was given a scrapbook for their photographs for use in the study. This gesture that initially was intended to give back to the children can also be viewed as a strategy that allows the continued connection between the child and hope sources through the reviewing of photos. In other words, reviewing of the photographs can be seen as an example of Bronfenbrenner's (1992) proximal processes that will in turn further enhance hope.

The intentional use of photographs to activate change and healing is used in phototherapy. In the words of phototherapist Judy Weiser (1988):

> Photographs and the process of taking and interacting with the prints are increasingly being used to give youth "a better picture" of themselves and to bring their lives "into sharper focus." Since "seeing is believing" and "a picture is worth a thousand words," "seeing for yourself" can be a powerful tool when input from others is not relevant or accepted (p. 345).

Cameras given to children to better understand their perceptions and experiences in the various ecologies of their lives can also be seen as a therapeutic tool to assist children in

literally focusing and paying attention to ways they experience hope. They can also help identify what it is in the children's environment that engenders hope. Thus photographs of school, neighbourhoods, parks, and homes in themselves can assist in the adjustment process for children to whom everything in the environment is new.

Using the Hope Quilt

Another activity undertaken during the Hope Project was the creation of a hope quilt. Inspired by the Hmong refugee women who make story quilts called *pa'dnau* (Shea, 1995), children made their own drawings to tell their own hope story (Figure 3.0). After the children drew their pictures and wrote or dictated their explanations, my research assistant and I helped them transfer their drawings onto creating a (10 sq. inch) 16-square hope quilt. Various hope stories emerged from the children's work including:

- journeys of survival and escape from war to
- snapshots of hopeful experiences such as seeing a United Nations food truck in a refugee camp,
- memories of playing with new friends in Canada, and
- cultural metaphors such as a broken jug meaning good luck in China.

The hope quilt provided another medium for the children to explore their experiences of hope. This creative medium allows children to move beyond their current contexts and reflect on past experiences and future goals.

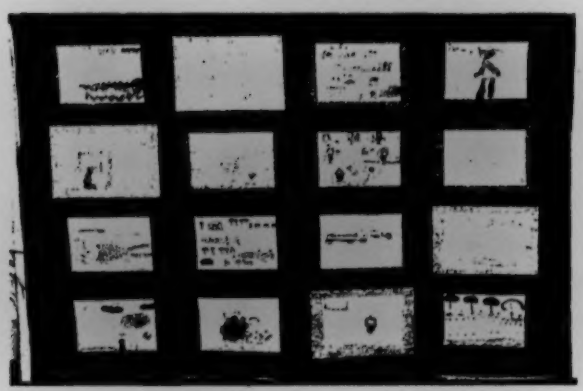

Figure 3.0 Image of the Hope Story Quilt

Observations of the children's work during this project support the use of an ecological framework with hope literature to guide practice. Children were able to identify sources of hope in various life contexts through the use of photography and art. This supports Bronfenbrenner's (1986) suggestion that subjective experiences such as hope may be closely associated with external objective experiences within the context of children's lives. Such results also support the contextualized nature of hope, which is often identified in the literature as the experience of hope within adverse situations (Marcel, 1965; Jevne and Miller, 1999; Frank, 1968). The cameras and story quilt in this case acted as ecological tools that enabled the children to cross the boundaries of time and systems and reflect on what is meaningful in the various contexts of their lives. The use of story has particular relevance to hope as studies have found hope to be best expressed through personal stories (Jevne, Necolaichuk, Boman, 1999).

Children Sharing Hope Work

Upon completion of their quilt, the children discussed what to do with it. As a group they decided to use it to share hope with other people. This desire to share their understanding of hope is illustrated well in a 17-year old boy's explanations regarding his hope quilt story:

> So I want to treat everybody equal and I am taught to love everyone and so when people see or read that [quilt], I hope it will give them hope. If they think nobody loves them they are wrong because somebody at least might love them.

The children had the opportunity to share their quilt as well as other pieces of art from their Hope Project at a small exhibit. The quilt and associated messages of hope have since been exhibited and shared with many refugees and immigrants in the centre, with teachers at a school, with women in prison, and with counsellors in training. The

quilt became a medium for the children to share their learning and experiences beyond the program centre. They became another example of the ecological value of this medium and this research as a means of transferring information to different groups.

The process of sharing results with others can also be viewed as hope enhancing for the children, particularly since the research highlighted the important reciprocal nature of hope. Thus, sharing children's explorations of hope can have a two-fold outcome -- enhancing hope by self-explorations as well as enhancing hope by sharing explorations with others. As an observer at the initial exhibit, it was inspiring to see the children proudly displaying their quilt and watching people take their work seriously. Memories of watching the children's faces, seeing their shy, but proud smiles, and listening to their happy giggles, have become an image of hope etched in the minds of several program staff, including mine.

Child-focused Hope Discussions with Adults

In this Hope Project, the focus was on the childrens' hope and adjustment experiences. In the search for a contextual understanding of these experiences, I also gathered information regarding the children's adjustment from program staff, parents and a group of educational cultural brokers[7] who were not involved in the EIP but were in contact with the children's families. Group interviews with parents and cultural brokers took place after study activities with children and preliminary results were available[8]. Each interview began with questions to find out how adult participants' perceived hope in their children and what they thought enhanced and hindered hope in these children.

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[7] The educational cultural brokers were a group of seven individuals representing various ethnic groups in the city who were employed by the organization that hosted the EIP. These brokers served as a bridge between families (including those in the program) and schools.

[8] Children were aware and had assented to their work being shared with adults associated with program.

Following this, children's work was presented and adult participants were asked to reflect on them.

Reflecting on Children's Hope with Parents and Cultural Brokers

In both circumstances, parents and brokers began the interviews by focusing on what one cultural broker described as the "dark side" of hope, the many challenges faced by these and other refugee and immigrant children during early years of adjustment. Challenges to hope related to school difficulties, in-home struggles with parental unemployment, financial difficulties, marital conflict, parent-child conflict, acculturation difficulties, racism, and child isolation. These are consistent with risk factors reported in literature (Parkins, 2004b; Beiser, et al., 1995). Parents, in particular, raised the concern that it is difficult for children to feel hopeful when their parents are feeling hopeless. Parents viewed this as a challenge since they felt responsible for instilling hope in their children. Cultural brokers who were themselves parents, reflected on this same concern.

Interestingly, once findings regarding children's perceptions were shared, both parents and cultural brokers began to change their discussion to reflect more hopeful language. One parent expressed surprise at viewing her daughter's work and talked about working hard to make her daughter feel proud of who she was. She had watched her child struggle at school and now that she was starting to do well, it pleased the mother to see that her daughter had begun to envision herself in the future.

Another parent who expressed doubt about his child's future due to his own personal sense of hopelessness (associated with unemployment and financial difficulties) was keen to learn about his son's work in the Hope Project. This parent later even gave a recommendation that the EIP provide academic/career counselling that in some ways

would assist him and his son in becoming more hopeful. Another parent expressed delight in his daughter's apparent happiness in this new country and asked that program staff teach the children stories that reflect female role models. This, he noted, may allow his daughter to learn to think for herself, an experience that he never had in his country of origin and which he explained caused his sense of hope to feel squelched at times by strong cultural expectations. Cultural brokers also began to explore hope-enhancing strategies for refugee and immigrant children (after hearing what experiences children identified as making them hopeful). They could see the value in using hope to help them and program staff in their work with immigrant and refugee children.

Reflecting on Children's Hope with Staff

In this study, I chose to work with staff, prior to working with the children, to allow staff to describe their views of hope and how they saw hope in the children without being influenced by the children's work. Like cultural brokers and parents, staff were keenly aware of the many barriers to hope in the children's lives. However, they were able to identify instances when hope was visible and elaborated on ways in which they engender hope in their young clients (Parkins 2004).

Upon completion of the project, I met again with staff and shared preliminary results involving children's data, staff data, and observations during the six months that I was with the program. A significant and important addition to the research during this meeting was that staff shared their personal experiences in managing the program and working with children who have had traumatic experiences. The importance of staff receiving training in trauma awareness, self care, and ongoing support (Parkins, 2004)

became evident as issues that need to be explored in work with refugee and immigrant children.

The use of the ecological framework to include adult perspectives provided valuable contextual information regarding the importance of hope in refugee and immigrants children's successful adjustment in their new country. It also helped demonstrate that hope radiated from the children to adults. As noted in the above examples of conversations with adults, a focus on hope discussions did not imply a denial of difficulties. Adults were still able to reflect on the "dark side" of hope by talking about the many barriers to hope they saw in the children's lives. However, after hearing ways in which children were finding hope within the context of the many challenges they experience, it seemed that space was opened for the adults to think about positive solutions to their children's problems. Not only does this support the relational characteristics of hope found in the literature (Farran, Herth, & Popovich, 1995), it also underscores the developmental ecological literature which demonstrates the value of the reciprocal nature of interactions (i.e. *proximal processes*) between adults and children (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Bronfenbrenner, cited in Cole & Cole, 1996).

Creating an Ecology of Hopefulness as an Intervention

Using the ecological framework to guide data collection activities, I discovered examples of activities that create hope that can be used as interventions. For example, exploring hope with cameras and creating a group hope quilt show potential for application within a therapeutic context. As a result, this case demonstrates how the ecological framework can inform a therapeutic environment when incorporated with a hope perspective. By putting wings on Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979, 1986), hope can

be intentionally explored, and enhanced in settings through the use of hope-based explorations and discussions that allow people to begin to work towards solutions within their own environments.

Adults seemed to be more hopeful when I talked to them about their children's experiences with hope. Such activities can be used intentionally in work with groups of parents and teachers who at times may become discouraged or feel despair when working in difficult conditions or with challenging children. This can be done by: (1) engaging adults in conversations exploring their personal hopes, followed by (2) discussions on their perspectives of hope in their children. (3)Finally, children's perspectives on hope can be presented to adults, followed by (4) conversations where adults reflect on the children's expressions. Support for building hope in group contexts comes from studies that show the relational aspect of hope (Hinds, 1988; Herth, 1990, Jevne, 1991) and those that show hope to be present in conditions that are stressful and even life-threatening (Frankl, 1984; Hinds & Martin, 1988; Marcel, 1962). In essence, this approach illustrates how hope can be created in community (Farran, Herth & Popovich, 1995) and adds to the hope literature by showing ways in which certain interventions may enhance hope within group or program settings.

This Hope Project also lends support to Bronfenbrenner's theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1992 Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) by illustrating one example of how hope can be seen as some of the fuel that drives the engines of development. In this case, hope-focused explorations and discussions open spaces for dialogue with children and adults regarding issues relevant to children. As such this approach shows promise for use in community-based work with children where

transformation often takes place in the form of group dialogue. In this case, children's voices can have the effect of enhancing dialogue towards creating solutions that are child-centred rather than prescribed from adult perspectives.

The sharing of results and further exploration of research questions by moving in and out of the various contexts in the childrens' lives permits obtaining more information. This cycling pattern to obtain information allowed children and staff to raise issues of importance to them. For example, staff reflected on the challenges of working with the children, and the children elaborated on their challenges in achieving hope including the issue of loneliness. While this can be seen as a research strategy to ensure authenticity of participants' experiences and trustworthiness of the research process (Stake, 1995), it can also be incorporated as part of an intervention that allows groups to reflect on their own work and the work of others, and at the same time create space for addressing further issues.

Finally, the interventions described in this paper are but a few examples of ways in which the ecological and hope perspectives can guide practice. Practitioners and researchers can explore other ways to enhance hope by creating connections between children and the various ecological systems. For example, this paper does not address ways in which refugee and immigrant children can connect to their natural environment as a means of enhancing hope and adjusting to a new country. Likewise, this paper does not address these children's interaction with systems beyond their microenvironments. For example, what approaches can be used to engender hope in refugee and immigrant children and their families when their adjustment is being affected by events in parental workplaces (exosystem) or public policies that impact schools (macrosystem).

Summary

This paper illustrates the relationship between hope and Bronfenbrenner's human ecology theory to present a hope-focused application with refugee and immigrant children. The Hope Project provides a case to demonstrate how this framework was used in the context of a research study in an Early Intervention Program. Aspects of the methodology and observations of the case show how exploring hope using creative approaches with children, providing ways for children to share their hope work with others, and discussing with adults how hope affects their children may create connections that enhance hope. Thus, attending to the human ecological approach can provide ideas for ways to build hope in children and those in their social and cultural milieu.

Combining the ecological perspective and hope literature shows the relevance of interventions that have direct and indirect positive impact on immediate family members and community members. This approach reflects Brooks (1994) point that a strengths-based approach does not imply ignorance of vulnerabilities, but instead broadens our perceptions to include the positive attributes of children. The use of hope-based language within community-based work is particularly useful since hope is a word common in everyday language that appears to be readily accessible to all participants. Creating connections through the exploration of hope with children and adults shows potential for contributing to approaches that seek to empowering communities.

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Figure Captions

Figure 3.0 Image of Hope Story Quilt

CHAPTER 5

Concluding Comments

Looking Back: Inquiries into Hope with Refugee Children

In this study, I went to a source of information that at times can be overlooked. I went to displaced children whose voices are often unheard in the child mental health literature. Their voices of courage and hope are often missing in the trauma literature which seems more often to speak of their pain and despair, and often from the perspective of adult researchers (McMullin & Loughry, 2000). In the spirit of Herman's (1992) approach to healing from loss and even trauma, a child's construction of what is meaningful in their life, what is hope-promoting and what is helpful were addressed through the lens of hope. Likewise, this research sought the views of frontline workers whose voices are rarely heard in the literature. While recognizing the importance of understanding what brings despair and the manifestations of despair in children, this study turned our attention to what helps children move from potential despair to hopefulness. The following section summarizes key observations from the research study, followed by further reflections arising from this study of psychosocial adjustment in refugee and immigrant children. This final chapter concludes with implications for practice, recommendations that are specific to the program, and a look towards future research.

I conclude this research by sharing my experience of an event that took place in the Early Intervention Program. This activity summarizes what this research sought to uncover in trying to better understand psychosocial adjustment in refugee and immigrant children and their experiences of hope.

It was a typically frigid January evening as I made my way to the Early Intervention Program (EIP). I had been told that the children were going to a local skating rink for their first planned outing but I did not feel particularly excited about the activity. My feet felt cold already as I walked over the crunchy snow on the parking lot to the centre. I could see the exhaust coming out of other cars that passed me and the steam from my breath. As if I needed a reminder, the flashing neon sign indicated –24C. I began wondering what the children would think of this activity given that most of them had never skated in their lives let alone on a cold winter evening. These were refugee and immigrant children who had been in Canada less than 4 years and all had come from areas of the world where winter and snow were foreign.

Despite the cold walk to the local skating rink there was a lot of energy in the little shack where the children donned their skates that had been recently donated by a local sports shop. With lots of energy in the air and a sense of bravery, most of them took to the ice in pairs slipping and sliding around, grabbing the wooden sides around the rink. Others held on to staff for dear life yet there was so much determination on most of their faces. I had 10 year-old Clara with me whose face exhibited a mixture of sheer willpower and fright as she slid slowly over the ice for the first time in her life. Asking her if she would like to take a break, she fiercely refused and instead asked me to move a little faster so she could get more balance. By the end of the evening most of the children were able to move slowly forward on their skates with some children skating alone around the rink as if they had been on skates all their lives. I remember thinking that they all seemed empowered as we sat warming up with hot chocolate in the shack. There was a lot of excitement as the children chatted about their different antics on the ice. Maria was asking one of the staff if she had seen her when she took off all on her own. Salum was laughing as he recalled falling in the soft snow before he had even stepped on to the ice! What a great activity that symbolizes embracing a new experience in a new county by taking a risk, facing fears, and feeling great after having learned something new -- another small step closer to adjusting to this new country, this new climate, and it's much loved sport. (Journal Entry, January 2003)

Remembering how cold I was feeling and the little enthusiasm I felt for the activity as I walked to the program earlier that evening, I began wondering about my quest to better understand hope in refugee children as they adjust to life in Canada. I could sense the children felt determined and perhaps hopeful this evening; they must be in order to come out on a cold evening and subject themselves to this new experience. Later in the project, having had opportunities to hear and learn from the children, some of the parents, and staff, this event in many ways captures the children's experiences of

hope and adjustment. Like skating with adults for the first time on a cold winter's night, I was to learn from the children that hope is felt deep within and enhanced when the children have empowering experiences, in the context of safe relationships that provide them with avenues to connect them to their new environment, to themselves, and others. As the children learned to skate on that cold evening, perhaps it reconstructed the meaning of surviving in the winter and of their ability to learn a new task. Perhaps the sense of empowerment of having learned a new skill gave them the hope to learn more. Perhaps being able to balance on a thin piece of metal on a slippery surface gave them a sense of control to negotiate other challenging situations. Perhaps this was a manifestation of hope, hope in action.

As captured in the vignette, my venture into exploring hope with refugee and immigrant children very quickly found that hope was present. Like the skating activity, once the children got to know me, they embraced the hope project with the same energy and courage. 'Hope lives within my heart' was reported by 9 out of the 10 children interviewed. Children admitted to difficulties and challenges that decrease hope, but hope was always present. Children in this study were also able to identify hope-engendering sources. Hope was engendered through self-connecting activities and through reciprocal relationships to people and objects in the natural environment. Through these connections it was suggested that a sense of empowerment and security are fostered, which are key contexts for the development of hope for this group of children.

Like the children in the study, program staff and cultural brokers also acknowledged the presence of hope in the children. While children did talk about

challenges that hinder hope, the proportion of time focused on challenges was less compared to adults in this study. Parents who participated in this study initially felt that there were too many challenges in their children's lives to allow for a hopeful orientation. However, these perspectives began to shift as they learned the results of the children's hope work. Adults, particularly parents and brokers, provided broad information on the contexts of hope challenges in the lives of the children. While staff talked about challenges, their focus within the program setting provided another source of rich information. Staff provided observations as to how hope is manifested in the children and ways in which their work engenders hope. A key observation is that staff descriptions of how they nurture hope were similar to what children observed as hope engendering within the source of hope entitled *secure relationships with important people*.

Reflections on Research and Results

Hope as a Fundamental Facet in Adjustment after Loss and Trauma

In Judith Herman's (1992) book, *Trauma and Recovery,* she points out the central experience of traumatic events are the loss of power and control and a disconnection from self and society in general. As such, an individual must reestablish a sense of safety in the world, rebuild a positive view of self, and reconnect to self and others. However, Herman maintains that none of these can take place without re-establishing basic trust. Erickson (1950) noted that one of a child's first psychosocial tasks is to develop basic trust or a sense of security in the world that is found within early caring relationships. If a child successfully negotiates this task, the ability to hope emerges. In other words, when a person has a core sense of safety or trust, this sets the wheels in motion for

activity, further development, and the willingness to take risks, all which are associated with hope. In the context of adverse or stressful events, Herman believes this sense of trust and rebuilding of hope provides a holding ground for movement towards change, recovery, and adjustment.

The descriptions of hope in this study support Erickson's (1950) theory about the importance of trust in the development of hope. Furthermore, descriptions of hope in this study support Herman's (1992) association of this vital human concept, hope, to human adjustment after challenging life experiences. Specifically, hope can be viewed as having two parts. The core part of hope is enduring and within a child while the more active part is linked to sources that sustain the core part of hope. This core or heart of hope may well be closer in nature to basic trust. It appears to be an intangible yet foundational experience that is linked to a generalized sense of safety emanating from important relationships.

In keeping with Erickson's theory, children in this study often referred to main caregivers as foremost sources that sustain hope. However, unlike basic trust that is described by Erickson as one-dimensional (an enduring sense of safety), hope in the context of this study is conceptualized as having another part that is active and dynamic. This active part is captured in sources of hope that help children to feel empowered and to engage in activities that connect them to other people and to nature as an extension of their world. This active part of hope may well be closer to Erickson's description of hope that emerges from having an established sense of trust. Herman, in discussing ways of reestablishing basic trust, referred to building safety within individuals, in relationships, and in the world. These three areas are similar to the sources of hope described in this

study. Therefore this study presents a broader description of hope that encompasses aspects of trust described by Erickson and extended by Herman in her work with trauma survivors. Thus hope is key in adjustment after difficult life experiences because it is closely linked to foundational developmental milestones of trust that can be shaken during life changing experiences.

The Importance of Reconstructing Stories after Loss and Trauma

In many ways this research was about finding another side to refugee and immigrant stories. In my attempt to better understand the missing part in mental health literature, I began to understand the bigger story of these children's lives - - stories that involve challenges as well as successes. The idea of story has particular relevance to this population of children. If our lives are a constant process of recreating story (Freedman & Combs, 1996), then disconnecting experiences such as migration require the reconstruction of life stories to incorporate new experiences. Traumatic experiences associated with war, loss and adjustment also bring with them the need to reconstruct life stories.

In the video *War is Not a Game*, community worker Simalchik (1995) observed that refugee and immigrant communities often cannot tell the stories associated with their experience of violence and continued victimization. Borrowing from the words of El-Salvadorian Jesuit priest and social activist, Ignacio Martin Baro, Simalchik noted that these stories remain unspoken and are maintained in "circles of silence." As a way of reclaiming these missing narratives and empowering communities, Simalchik called for Martin Baro's "circles of solidarity" (that is contexts in communities that enable individuals to voice their experiences and in doing so, support each other). Jevne and

Miller (1999) noted that "a silence often accompanies times of low hope or no hope" (p. 27). This silence may be self initiated or imposed by others or through messages in the larger culture. Either way, these authors encourage breaking the silence as a path to increasing hope. This study presented one approach towards the creation of circles of solidarity within an existing program - an approach that also allows individuals to break the silence and give voice to their experiences.

In his book, *The Politics of Storytelling*, Jackson (2002) argues that reconstituting events in a story shifts the storyteller from a passive subject in disempowering circumstances to actively reworking events, which enhances a sense of agency. However, because of the perpetuation of silencing children through disempowering experiences (i.e. challenges that hinder hope), many refugee children feel disconnected and don't have a structure to tell the story of their lives. They have lost their homes due to war, have had to endure the harsh life of refugee camps and in resettlement countries they continue to struggle with language, culture, and financial barriers. One approach to helping children reconstruct personal narratives is by providing them with a structure to do this. In trauma literature, telling of the "trauma story" means that the stressful event must be reconstructed and processed within a structure where the traumatized person feels like a competent human being rather than a victim.

The hope-focused approach described in this study provides one structure whereby children can begin to connect to what is important and in doing so begin to weave their personal narratives. As Jackson (2002) pointed out, reconstituting events through the lens of hope can help shift children from passive subjects in disempowering circumstances to active agents in their own lives. Therefore rather than bringing forward

the part that is disempowered by focusing on traumatic experiences, asking the children to explore hope gave voice to the aspect that is empowered in the children. That is, a part of the children that has somehow come through despite the many challenges they have had and continue to experience. Asking about hope taps into how a person remains connected to life, how they find meaning, and in this structure, life stories are continually constructed.

Implications for Practice

Care must be taken in generalizing these findings. However, the conceptual framework and ideas generated have relevance to individuals within counselling and school psychology practice as well as individuals who work in community settings. First, the observation that the process of talking about hope in itself seemed to allow a child to pay attention to what is good in them, what works, and what is helpful, has practical implications. Narrative therapists Freedman and Combs (1996) share the social constructionist view that realities are constituted through language used within particular contexts. In the same manner, they view change of any type to involve a change in language. Therefore their work with people involves engaging in conversations that lead to the negotiation of new meanings for problematic beliefs, feelings and behaviors. In doing so, the development of new language and altered views of reality take place. From a practitioner perspective, social-constructionist views on language raises the issue of the power our questions have on the people with whom we work. Do the questions we ask children empower them or marginalize them? Do we perpetuate victim status and helplessness when we focus entirely on childhood worries, challenges and stressors? Practitioners can reflect on unspoken assumptions in the questions they ask children and

use these reflections to ensure they obtain holistic views of children's experiences. That is, views that capture children's experiences of success and challenges.

Second, this study emphasized the importance of connecting (to self, others and environment) as a key process in refugee and immigrant children's adjustment. Individuals working with children within school and community settings can use this two-way or mutually reciprocal process intentionally to assist with psychosocial adjustment. Development of a sense of coherence of one's life story, personal and cultural identity are all important developmental milestones to be attained in all children, but particularly in those whose lives have been disrupted by dislocation, loss and changes. Identifying strategies that children use for this process, can assist in strengthening families, peer relationships, and help children access role models to enhance connections to significant others.

Third, this study utilized a holistic approach to working with children and adults in their environment to allow the whole picture of hope to become visible. Through the use of activities that foster connections within children and between children and those in their milieu, this study showed three interventions that can enhance hope in refugee and immigrant children: (1) Working with children to help them connect to themselves by exploring understanding and sources of hope, then (2) creating external connections between children and adults through child-focused hope based discussions, and (3) children sharing their hope-work. Used together these three interventions presented an example of working holistically within a program setting. These activities can be adapted and used by practitioners who are interested in understanding concepts such as hope or as a child-centered process for generating solutions for programs.

Program Recommendations

Time spent in the Early Intervention Program listening to staff, parents and children resulted in identification of issues and recommendations which in turn can be used to enhance program development. To honor the experience of the adults who interact with children, their recommendations are incorporated with those gleaned from my study findings.

Supporting Children's and Families' Hope

Staff identified the need for further connection with families in order to enhance their own work with the children. Given the challenges of working with very recent newcomers, the identification of cultural brokers as a possible link between staff and families was developed at the end of the program. Incidentally, I had also identified the potentially important role of cultural brokers during the course of the research. In addition, a focus on educational activities for the youth through an education club and employment club was planned for the next year. Staff had identified the need to help youth with educational difficulties by providing supports within the same safe setting. A caution for this approach was the importance of including a balance of learning and recreation into the program, as the program seemed to represent a separate space from home and school. Over the period of time spent in the program, the children were observed to take ownership of the space created for them. Therefore, it would be important not to change it too much while at the same time accommodating areas of need.

Cultural brokers and a number of staff identified the significance of and need for role models for the children as a means of enhancing hope. Children were in need of role models who worked closely with them in a hope-engendering relationship that modeled

positive adjustment within the new cultural and educational system. Like-ethnic role models and particularly those within the same generation were highly recommended as this would allow children to easily identify with them. For example, one ethnic community had recently held a ceremony to mark the academic achievement of recent junior and senior high graduates as a means to encourage learning and motivation in younger children. Similar success-marking ceremonies and the inclusion of guest speakers to the program who were university or high school students to motivate children were recommended. In addition, cultural brokers saw further hope for the children by supporting and educating parents about the importance of being actively involved in their children's education and daily life. This was seen as particularly useful in working with parents with no educational background and those from cultural groups where education is not as valued as other skills such as connectedness to others.

Supporting Staff's Hope

A final recommendation from this study is the need to recognize and support hope in staff members. Individuals working with this population or similar multiple-need groups are at risk of becoming burnt out by the nature of the work and lack of resources to meet all needs. Recall that recognition of strengths and a hope-focus does not imply the ignorance of difficulties, and thus the importance of preparedness for managing children's personal reactions to and stories of trauma and loss is important. Historically this program required everyone working with the population to undertake intense trauma training. Due to the changes in the program this was not available to all of the new staff in the period of this study. Staff reference to apprehension of trauma and some experiences of vicarious trauma speaks to the significance and importance of prior

training to better empower staff with their work. Clearly all program staff were compassionate and committed to the work they did, yet these same qualities could lead to compassion fatigue and even burnout if self care was not attended to continuously. Ongoing supervision, training, and self care plans are an important component of supporting staff's hope and commitment to their work.

Looking Ahead: Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study was limited to participants in a single program and focused specifically on children's hope and psychosocial adjustment. To broaden the usefulness of this exploratory research, future research could incorporate a larger and more widely representative group of children. This study could also be replicated with similar groups of children across a number of programs. Another approach could focus specifically on one ethnic group to obtain more in-depth cultural information. The ecological framework described could guide future studies whereby both adults and older children explore hope and hope-engendering experiences separately and then engage in hope-based discussions together. Similarly, this approach could be used with different ages, different ethnicities as a means of encouraging dialogue between different groups of children.

In using hope and Bronfenbrenner's ecological model together, a place is created that allows children to connect to their natural environment through the use of photography and drawings. Further connections that are not addressed here but can become meaningful to a child's sense of place within the environment could include field trips to natural parks, adoption of animals in a local zoo, and neighborhood group walks. Further research is needed to explore hope and a sense of place in children. Finally, an important component of this study was the focus on front-line workers and their work

with refugee and immigrant children. Recognizing their important contribution to the well-being of this population gives rise to the need for more research on their experiences.

Closing Remarks

It seems fitting to end this dissertation with one participant's description of his initial awareness of hope during his journey to Canada. Paul's story serves the dual purpose of capturing his own journey to Canada and my own journey into research with children like Paul:

> *Once I was in a plane ... I was taking pictures of buildings from far away and the beautiful clouds. It was something good to look at... It was like when I was looking at everything small, I thought I was in another world. I was thinking a person should never feel alone because the world is a very big place...When I came to Canada I realized then that the world is very big and I should feel hopeful. So if you are having troubles, there are probably other people who are having the same troubles and we can share them and help each other. (Paul, 17-year old boy)*

First, Paul made an important personal discovery regarding hope at the beginning of his journey to a new land where discoveries continue to unfold as he adjusts. Like Paul's journey this study represents the initial discoveries into a land that contains much unknown terrain yet to be discovered. In this study we have begun an understanding of hope and psychosocial adjustment in refugee and immigrant children, yet more will unfold with further research. Second, Paul's story aptly captures the idea of connection (to self, to others, to the world) that weaves throughout this document. In this story, Paul's journey to Canada was the beginning of hopefulness when he discovered that he was not alone. Through this research journey I join the community of researchers and practitioners committed to improving the lives of children like Paul by advocating on

their behalf and giving voice to their experiences through research and dissemination. It is my hope that more children like Paul will continue to discover that they are not alone.

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APPENDIX A

Information Letters and Consent Forms

Parent/Guardian Information Letter

Dear Parent/Guardian

My name is Sophie Parkins and I am a volunteer at XXX and a graduate student at the University of Alberta. As part of my university program, I am working on a project with *The Early Intervention Program* to understand adjustment experiences that build hope in refugee and immigrant children. The information gained from this project may help to improve the program and provide recommendations for other programs, families, and others (such as teachers). Research will be published and the results will be made available to you, at the end of the project.

I would like to include you and your child(ren) in this study. All information for the study will be gathered by using the writing and pictures/photographs taken by children during program activities and in individual and group interviews. For the purpose of the study I will reproduce some pictures and photographs.

This study is completely voluntary. All names and responses will be kept private by using fake names and by removing items that could possibly be traced back to you or your child. Photographs with children or family members will not be included unless you request this. Interviews will be taped and typed by Sophie and kept in a safe (locked) location and destroyed at the end of the study. Since the project is voluntary, you or your child will be able to leave the study or remove any of their material from the study at any time without negative consequences.

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Boards of the Faculties of Education and Extension. Sophie can be contacted at any time to answer questions or concerns. Her supervisor, Dr. Fern Snart (492-3751) is also available. XXX and XXX are also available to discuss any questions or concerns at XXX.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sophie Parkins
PhD. Candidate
Dept. of Educational Psychology
University of Alberta
433-5899

Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Hope and Refugee/Immigrant Adjustment in Children

Please return this form to indicate whether or not you and your child(ren) agree or disagree to participate in this study.

Date: _____

Permission Granted:

I _____ (parent/guardian's name) **agree** to participate in the study of hope and refugee/immigrant adjustment in children. I also **give my permission** to have _____ (child's name/children's names) participate in same study. I understand if we later decide not to participate, we may withdraw at any time without negative consequence.

_____ _____
Parent/Guardian signature Date

_____ _____
Witness signature Date

Permission NOT Granted:

I _____ (parent/guardian's name) do **not agree** to participate in the study of hope and refugee/immigrant adjustment in children. I also **do not give my permission** to have _____ (child's name/children's names) participate in same study.

_____ _____
Parent/Guardian signature Date

_____ _____
Witness signature Date

Participant Information Letter

Dear Participant

I would like to include you in a project that is being conducted together with *The Early Intervention* program to understand adjustment experiences that build hope in refugee and immigrant children. The information gained from this project may help to improve the program and provide recommendations for other programs, families, and others (such as teachers). The research findings will be published and the results will be made available to you, at the end of the project.

All information for the study will be gathered by using the writings and pictures/photographs taken by you during program activities, and by individual and group interviews. For the purposes of this study I will reproduce pictures and photographs.

This study has no bearing on your performance in the program and your participation is completely voluntary. All names and responses will be kept private by using fake names and removing items that could possibly be traced back to you. Photographs of you or family members will not be included unless your parent asks this. Interviews will be taped and typed by Sophie and kept in a safe (locked) location and destroyed at the end of the study. Since the project is voluntary, you will be able to leave the study or remove any of their material from the study at any time without negative consequences.

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Boards of the Faculties of Education and Extension. Sophie (433-5899) can be contacted at any time to answer questions or concerns. Her supervisor, Dr. Fern Snart (492-3751) is also available. XXX and XXX are also available to discuss any questions or concerns at XXX.

Sophie Parkins
PhD. Candidate
Dept. of Educational Psychology
University of Alberta
433-5899

Child Consent Form

Hope and Refugee/Immigrant Adjustment in Children

Please return this form to indicate whether or not your permission is granted for participation in this study.

Permission Granted:

I _____ (child's name) **agree** to participate in the study of hope and refugee/immigrant children's adjustment. I understand if I later decide not to participate, I may withdraw at any time without negative consequence.

_____ _____

Child's signature Date

Permission NOT Granted:

I _____ (child's name) do **not agree** to participate in the study of hope and refugee/immigrant children's adjustment.

_____ _____

Child's signature Date

Staff/Volunteer Information Sheet and Consent Form

Dear Staff/Volunteer

As part of my university program, I am working on a project with *The Early Intervention Prgram* to understand adjustment experiences that build hope in refugee and immigrant children. The information gained from this project may help to improve the program and provide recommendations for other programs, families, and others (such as teachers). Research will be published and the results will be made available to you, at the end of the project.

I would like to include you in this study. All information for the study will be gathered by using the writings and drawing or photographs produced by children during program activities and by individual and group interviews. For the purpose of the study, I will reproduce some pictures and photographs.

This study is completely voluntary. All names and responses will be kept private by using fake names and by removing items that could possibly be traced back to you or the children. Photographs with children or family members will not be included. Interviews will be taped and typed by Sophie and kept in a safe (locked) location and destroyed at the end of the study. Since the project is voluntary, you and the children will be able to leave the study or remove any material from the study at any time without negative consequences.

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Boards of the Faculties of Education and Extension. Sophie can be contacted at any time to answer questions or concerns. Her supervisor, Dr. Fern Snart (492-3751) is also available. XXX and XXX are also available to discuss any questions or concerns at XXX.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sophie Parkins
Volunteer, Securing Hopeful Futures Program
PhD. Candidate, Dept. of Educational Psychology
Phone: 433-5899

Staff/Volunteer Consent Form

Hope and Refugee/Immigrant Adjustment in Children

Please return this form to indicate whether or not your permission is granted for your participation in this study.

Permission Granted:

I _____ (staff/volunteer's name) **agree** to participate in the study of hope and refugee/immigrant children's adjustment. I understand that if I later decide not to participate, I may withdraw at any time without negative consequence.

_____ _____
Staff/Volunteer signature Date

Permission NOT Granted:

I _____ (staff/volunteer's name) do **not agree** to participate in the study of hope and refugee/immigrant children's adjustment

_____ _____
Staff/Volunteer signature Date

APPENDIX B
Hope Project Activities*

I. EXPLORING HOPE: WHAT IS HOPE TO YOU?

Objective

- To introduce children to the concept of hope as personal and different for everyone
- To orient children to the idea of talking about their hope
- To introduce children to the hope project and associated activities

Time

- 60 Minutes with each group

Material Needed

- Chart
- Paper and drawing material
- Audio tape and cassettes
- Hope books (scrap books) for children to write or draw in

Procedure

1. Ask children what they think hope is. Accept any answer and record answers on the chart.
   Ask what the word for hope is in their languages and also record on the chart

2. Ask children if they can recall a time when they felt hopeful in the past and also in the present.
   Ask what events, people, places, or things make them think of hope

3. Miracle Question: Imagine that you went to sleep and, while you were asleep, all your memories were erased or taken away but you had the choice to keep two memories. What two memories would you keep that would make you feel hopeful? Why?
4. Ask the children to draw each memory and write about the memory
   Children can also have someone write on their behalf.

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* Some of the activities have been adapted from Strebchuk, S., Gurnett, J., & Wong, G. (1994). Children looking at hope. Unpublished manuscript. University of Alberta; Parkins, 1997

II. COMMUNICATING HOPE: WHAT IS HOPE TO YOU?

Objective

- To introduce children to the idea of images as a means of communicating
- Children will makes collages to communicate what represents hope to them and what is hopeful.

Time

- 45 Minutes with each group

Material Needed

- Manila paper for collage base
- Magazines, scissors, glue
- Markers, pencils
- Hope books

Procedure

5. Review with children what they think hope is based on discussion from previous week's activities.

2. Invite children to share drawings/explanations in their hope books from previous week's activity.

6. Share hope painting by L.O. with children as an example of a visual image as a representation of hope. Share with children that they will be using photography as another way of sharing what they perceives as giving them hope in their lives.

7. Introduce the collage making activity. Instruct children to make a collage using magazine pictures, words, colors, and other pieces of material to make a collage that communicates what represents hope. Have children write (or dictate) in their hope books – what the collage pictures and words represent

III. HOPE PHOTOS

Objective

- To introduce children to photography as a means of communicating about their hope
- To introduce children to basic mechanics of photo taking
- To have children begin planning their photo taking activities

Time

- 60-90 minutes for each group

Materials Needed

- Paper folded into nine sections
- Pencils and Color Pencils
- Disposable Cameras
- Note Books

Procedure

8. A guest photographer/art professor will give the children a short overview of the cameras and how to take pictures

9. The children will be reminded of the project instructions that they will be taking photographs of images that represent or make them hopeful in their lives.

10. Each child will spend time planning some of the photo activities by drawing or writing about photos they are going to take.

11. During computer time the children will write about their planned pictures. Others will also use the computer time to complete their explanations of their hope collages (from the previous session)

IV. HOPE STORIES: HOPE QUILT

Objective

- To introduce children to the idea of exploring personal hope experiences using stories
- To make personal hope stories on a quilt medium

Time

- 60-90 minutes for each group

Materials Needed

- Markers, paper
- Quilt material – cloth, fabric paint, fabric markers

Procedure

12. Talk about Hmong people and Padnau story quilts as an introduction to idea of telling stories on the quilt medium. Invite children to explore personal hope stories using drawings that will be transferred to a quilt.

13. Talk about how the children's collages can tell a story about their hope. Invite children to share personal hope stories by reviewing their collages.

14. The children will then work on hope stories using drawings which will be transferred to a quilt over next sessions.

15. Explanations of stories will be written in hope books or dictated.

APPENDIX C

Sample of Interview Questions

Hope and Refugee/Immigrant Children's Adjustment

Interview questions are intended to be open ended, with follow up questions asked to obtain more detail and allow for personal understanding and experiences to be expressed*.

For Children's Group Interview:

I. Could you tell me what comes to your mind when you think of the word hope?
II. Could you share about a time in your life since arriving in Canada when you felt particularly hopeful?
III. Could you share with me two incidents that you believe were key in building your hope
IV. Could you share with me two incidents that took your hope away
V. If you were to draw a picture (can have children draw the picture) of something to remind you of hope, what would that picture be?
VI. Please name an activity/event/person that tends to increase your hope
VII. Imagine that you went to sleep and, while you were asleep, all your memories were erased or taken away but you had the choice to keep two memories. What two memories would you keep that would make you feel hopeful? Why?

For Children's Photo-Assisted Interviews:

VIII. Please share with me why this photo tells something about hope to you.
IX. If you were to take two other photographs (beyond current photos) of something that makes you hopeful, what would I see? Why would you choose those images?
X. If you could only choose 3 of the 12 photos, which ones would you choose? Why?
XI. If you could only choose 1 photo, which one would you choose? Why?
XII. If you were going on a trip to a far away land where nobody knew anything about hope, which photo, if only allowed one, would you take to help maintain your hope and teach others about hope?

For Staff/Parent Interviews:

I. With the children in mind, could you describe what might be important to a child's/ your child's hope during these early years of resettlement? Can you share specific examples?
II. What experiences make children/ your child less hopeful? Can you give specific examples based on your observations/experiences?
III. Is hope important in the work you do? Have participant explain.

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* Some questions have been adapted from Edey, Jevne, & Westra, 1998; Jevne, 1991; Parkins, 1997